# 9.8.23 MISILC Council Meeting

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay this is Jamia. Are we ready to begin the meeting? Is everyone here?

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: We do now have a quorum. So, if you want to get started you may do so.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, this is Jamia Davis and I would like to call the meeting to order at 12:04 p.m. And first I would like to ask if there are any accommodation requests necessary for this meeting today? Okay, hearing none, Tracy can you call the roll please?

>> TRACY BROWN: Aaron Andres who should be here soon. Frank Animikwam? Should be here soon. Glen Ashlock.

>> GLEN ASHLOCK: Here

>> TRACY BROWN: Allen Beauchamp.

>> ALLEN BEAUCHAMP: Here.

>> TRACY BROWN: Erica Coulston was unable to join us today. Jamia Davis.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Here.

>> TRACY BROWN: Stephanie Deible, here. Mindy Kulasa, here. Jan Lampman was called away and not with us today. Theresa Metzmaker? Here. Mark Pierce? Was unable to join us today. You have a quorum.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Tracy. And now we will go to the next item on our agenda, which is the consent agenda. And within the consent agenda we have the approval of the September 8th, 2023, business meeting proposed agenda. The approval of the June 9th, 2023, draft business meeting minutes. And the executive committee minutes. The financial reports as well as the Executive Director report. And I would like to call for a motion to approve the consent agenda now.

>> MINDY KULASA: Mindy Kulasa, so moved.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay and may have a second, please.

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: Stephanie Deible, support.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you. Now for our next item on the agenda we have a presentation by Ms. Rachel Prevatt of Michigan disability rights. And she is going to present today on voting rights and accessibility issues. And so, while we first want to welcome Rachel here today and just thank you everyone for joining our Council meeting today and Rachel, we are so glad to have you here and we are excited to have you present to us today. So, whenever you're ready.

>> RACHEL PREVATT: Thank you so much for having me today. I'm really excited to connect with the CIL system and learn more about how we can all work together. So, I'm going to start just kind of by introducing myself and giving an overview why I'm here and then I will talk about DRM's work with voting and potentially some collaborative opportunities. Then if anyone has questions, I'm also happy to answer questions. So just to start, my name is Rachel Prevatt. I am the voter engagement specialist for disability rights Michigan. We are the state's federally mandated and funded protection and advocacy agency which means that we cover advocacy for disability rights across the state geographically and also for the full life span for people with all kinds of disabilities. And part of our work is protection and advocacy for voting access that was passed as part of legislation in the year 2002. So, I've taken over this position as of just a little less than two years ago. So, I originally did community and institutional advocacy, which is kind of sad, frustrating stuff now I get to do the exciting proactive stuff where nobody gets hurt. And I get to feel really good about it.

So, to just kind of I guess launch into the work that we are doing, I want to tell you a little bit about some projects that DRM has either recently finished or has underway.

So, our first big voting project was last year when we worked with the city of Lansing clerk's office and partners voters from across the State of Michigan to make a video to train election workers on supporting voters with disabilities. It's a short video. It's by no means exhaustive but our hope was that we are giving a training tool to clerks and other elections officials to make sure that people with disabilities are treated with respect and dignity and supported at the polls. We do a lot of educational work to make sure election workers understand people with disabilities have the right to vote in Michigan. And to help them understand the importance of the voter assist terminals which are accessible voting machines that should be available at every polling location. But we also wanted to just kind of touch on the issue of sensitivity and respect because when we speak to our constituents voters with disabilities tell us that this is where a lot of the problems, they experience lie is just with those kinds of interpersonal exchanges. A lot of times what we hear from our constituents it seems like poll workers are overwhelmed and I think maybe a little embarrassed or don't want to do anything to embarrass themselves. And we want to give them the tools that they need to act right and make sure we all get to exercise our private and independent ballot.

So that video is available on our YouTube. If you search disability rights Michigan on YouTube it will be there. We had participants from around the State of Michigan. We had a voter from Flint named Eric Patrick Thomas, a self-advocate and active and we had someone from the Washtenaw County CIL so one of your folks. We had one of our employees, Chelsea Chamberlain, who is blind and also represented herself as a voter. Teddy Dorr set who is a deaf man from Detroit who is just dynamic. And is now making another series of videos for us that I will talk a little bit about. Also, a young woman from Lansing who participated in the filming but did not want to be you know interviewed and I get that. I don't love being interviewed either. So that video is available to the public. We shared it with the Michigan municipal clerk's association. We shared it with the Department of State and the Bureau of Elections. And the Bureau of Elections is encouraging clerks to use it as sort of an opening to conversations about how to better support people with disabilities while they vote. So that is something I'm really proud of and excited about. I encourage you all to check it out and if you think it's useful to your municipal clerk if you are an election worker I really encourage you to connect people with this resource because we are very happy with it and free to anyone who thinks it's useful to them and part of a larger push we are trying to do, to do a lot more statewide collaborative education and engagement on these issues. Historically DRM has been kind of isolated on voting issues. And I want to make sure we are touching all of the communities that we work with. I represent myself as a person with a disability. I can't speak about everyone else's experiences, and I just want to make sure the people who need to be at the table are at the table. Because I don't own that table, right?

Yeah, so that is my election worker video. We are also working with the Michigan Department of State on some other educational videos. They would like us to help update the videos they use to train election workers on voter assist terminals. Those videos right now are very dry and boring, and the manuals are very dry and boring, and we need to make this easier for election workers. So that their first feeling when they end up having to help someone with that they are not overwhelmed or frustrated or any bad mood that causes them to act in ways that are not ideal with our voters.

So, we are working on that training video. Process. We are developing scripts. And working with the Department of State on that. I also represent disability rights Michigan on election policy working group. A lot of you are probably aware this is a big year for election policy in Michigan because of the changes in the dynamics of the legislature, because of changes in the law when we passed prop two. There are big things coming. So, in the next year we are going to see things like the roll out of early voting, access to curbside voting, the no reason absentee ballot request system will not require you to repeatedly request ballots. You can be on a permanent absentee voter list. A lot of exciting developments both from prop two and in other areas of policy. Right now, Senator Camilleri and a coalition of democratic representatives are working on what they are calling the Michigan Voting Rights Act. Some of you may know that the Federal Voting Rights Act has lost a lot of its power over the last several years due to Supreme Court rulings. And the State of Michigan wants to make sure we are protecting those rights even if they are not protected federally that is when you include things like upholding the right for people to request monitoring at polling locations where there have been documented violations of people's rights including violations of the rights of people with disabilities. And we are really hoping that making this a current issue in Michigan will give us the opportunity to work with partners in legal advocacy and also just in grass roots and self-advocacy to make sure where there are problems they are being investigated. They are being litigated if they can. So that we can get those monitors where we need them. As things are right now, we know there are lots of problems. We just don't have the mechanisms to fix them, so we are working a lot on improving those policies and the Department of State and the Bureau of Elections have been surprisingly receptive to reaching out and getting input on issues. As issues arise that are more specific to other groups, I try to pass things along. For example, there was a lot of interest in discussion of a possible disability accommodation electronic submission of absentee ballots so being able to return your vote on the Internet, not the same as voting online, more secure than that. But that process is somewhat controversial and does not necessarily touch DRM as directly as it touches groups like the national federation for the blind who actually litigated on issues around accessibility and absentee voting so that is an issue where I was like I can tell you what I've heard but let's talk to the people that actually touch this issue most closely. That is a lot of the work we are trying to do now is just build those connections and build kind of a coalition of all of the different disability advocacy groups whether they are self-advocacy groups or federally mandated organizations like us and you. To just create a network that really supports the needs and rights of people with disabilities around voting issues.

We also do a lot of work with the Bureau of Elections directly on the issue of voter assist terminal demos which is something that I think could potentially be of interest to centers for Independent. I know the capitol area Disability Network has worked with the local, I believe the county clerk on doing demos at events like their ADA anniversary. That is something we really want to make sure people know is available wherever you are in the state. If your CIL is interested in having either the VATs, the voter assist terminals specific to your areas or all three voter assist terminals demoed at your location that is something I would really love to help with. We want people to know the machines exist and it's not a favor the clerk does for you, it's a constitutional right at this point. We want to make sure those things are in the public eye. And those people are talking about them. Also, that people understand how they work. I think we all know that voting has become a controversial issue in Michigan over the last several years. One of the controversies that came out of the last Federal election in 2022 is that one of the voter assist terminals was stolen. And ultimately ended up on eBay and it appeared that it was stolen in part because people believed that they might be able to get data from that machine. That was an opportunity for us to explain that voter assist terminals are really essentially just a word processor for your ballot. It fills out your ballot for you. It does not enter anything into the machine itself. It does not save any information. It prints out your ballot and that's essentially where that relationship ends. So that kind of education we are seeing a big need for. We are seeing a big need to make sure that people are informed and understand their rights. And also seeing a big need for support to municipal clerks for situations where their constituents don't understand the rights of people with disabilities. We've received some calls from clerks who needed assistance because there were other members of their community under mining the people of disabilities to vote or suggesting they should not be allowed to vote and that's not how it works here. In Michigan people with disabilities whether or not you have a guardian, whether or not you are an in‑patient facility, whether or not you have been committed involuntarily you retain those rights. We want to make sure people know that and they are able to exercise those rights as they choose.

So that's a lot of the work that we are doing right now with MDOS. It's just that kind of outreach and making sure that people understand what their rights are and how they can vote more accessibly.

We are also working quite a bit with the promote the vote coalition. So you all might know the name promote the vote from prop two from 2022. That was a ballot initiative that the coalition developed and successfully passed. They also developed and passed the no reason absentee voting ballot initiative that we passed in 2018. So promote the vote has worked pretty diligently to open access to voting for people in Michigan. They are a nonpartisan coalition. And they have been really great about not only reaching out to incorporate us into just their general activities but also proactive and mindful of where they can be more accessible and more mindful of accessibility. So, there are two major things we do with them. One is we do a lot of consults on policy with them because they have their own policy people. And a lot of consults on accessibility especially their media accessibility. So, these are things like making sure that if they are posting a graphic on Facebook there is descriptive text. Making sure if they are developing videos there is going to be a version of that video that has ASL translation. Things that make that information accessible to all voters without making those voters feel like they have to ask for those accommodations. And that's become something that promote the vote is highly engaged in and really happy with how that has come along.

The other thing we are working on with them is kind of the biggest example of that. So, promote the vote as a coalition is responsible for the Michigan voting.org know your rights guide. That guide is widely disseminated across the state at every election. It's a little Bluebook let that says know your rights on the front. Likely you have seen it. The League of Women Voters widely districts it DRM distributes it at voting education events, but the guide as know is not especially accessible. Not just because it's a physical print guide and had staples on it and limited which populations we could even get it to. But also, things like the language and the phrasing. Promote the vote is a coalition led by attorneys. My organization is also led by attorneys so I'm sympathetic when you ask attorneys to write something. They write like attorneys. It's complicated. It can be confusing and want to use exactly the right words and that really does not lend itself to plain language or digestible accessible media. We worked with a consult or a consultant out of the plain language institute. A firm that works with the plain language institute. We are in the process of developing what we hope will one day be a universally accessible know your rights guide. The first step is accessible print guide printed in a way we can take it in facilities where things like stapled would be a concern that is plain language that is illustrated where necessary and that just makes things more digestible and formats them in a way that will not only help people with disabilities understand their rights but frankly help everyone in Michigan understand their rights. There are lots of people with low literacy or diminished literacy in the United States and don't think of themselves as being disabled and people who English is not the first language or benefit from having a simplified version of what they need to know to successfully vote. So that is starting out as a print guide. It will also be videos including videos with ASL and audio recordings that will be available on the Michigan voting.org website. And that's a project that we are excited to be building an ever-growing coalition around. So, in working with promote the vote we kind of brought the disability communities to the table and promote the vote brought the other underrepresented communities to the table. Because their imperative is to serve underrepresented voting communities.

So, groups like MDCR were there. MDRC. We all have the same acronyms, don't we? It is a combination of MD and R. But all sorts of groups that were able to DD Council to speak on their constituents' needs, what they believe the biggest concerns were and also included groups like immigrant groups representing I'm sorry my brain just froze. Representing Latino communities in southwest Detroit and Muslim immigrant communities, represent people who have been recently incarcerated or who are currently incarcerated, awaiting trial. In Michigan, the only time you lose your right to vote is when you have been sentenced and are serving your sentence for a crime. So, people who are in jail waiting to be arraigned or sentenced or whatever part of the process they are in retain that right to vote and there are very few advocates that directly target the groups so we wanted those people at the table and thank goodness they came, maybe not staples that is a good idea.

We are excited about the project and in a holding pattern because election policy is changing, and we want to make sure we know what goes in the book before we start writing it. But as we progress, we are working to find individual voters to represent their experience as a voter to provide questions and feedback based on what we develop for the guide. So, we want to make sure that if we want this to support all of Michigan that means that a person who does not speak English as a first language needs to look at it. A person who has intellectual disability needs to look at it. We know a lot of these experiences are overlapping and intersecting and we want to make sure we get kind of a quilt of as many people as possible to give feedback on the project. That is something I'm hoping I will probably circle back on once we are actually looking for people to interview. We have some lined up, but the guide will be comprehensive and there is no way to pick one or three or 20 people to represent all experiences. So, we want to make sure that we are covering as much ground as possible.

The last thing that I want to talk about in terms of sort of ongoing activities projects is our voting with disabilities in Michigan coalition which is actually what brought me here today. So voting with disabilities in Michigan when I inherited it about two years ago was a very small coalition of essentially DRM, the DD Council, BIAMI, the Brain Injury Association and Disability Rights coalition. It was a great group, but I feel we can get more people involved in it. We are trying to connect with other groups and develop projects to pull other people into that project. So as of right now disability rights Michigan is represented, DD Council is represented, self-advocates of Michigan are represented. The national federation for the blind of Michigan. Michigan disability rights Council. The brain injury association. MISILC, which is you, Steve represents you all at our meetings. And the Detroit disability power organization. Which kind of came to our group more recently because they have become very engaged in voting issues. I don't know how many of you had the opportunity to see the presentation that they gave a couple weeks ago but they did an incredible audit of polling place accessibility on election days. In Metro Detroit. It is arguably the single largest auditing activity that has ever taken place in the United States around voting accessibility with people with disabilities and as I'm sure you would all expect we could all do better. There are not ‑‑ there is not the level of accessibility that we need for people with disabilities. Even if we are only going to the standard of the ADA, we are falling short. And as we all know there are lots of things about the ADA that in themselves fall short. What a wheelchair looked like in 1989 is not necessarily what a wheelchair looks liked too, experiences and technology changes. We partnered with Detroit disability power and offered to help support expansion of that effort. Protection and advocacy organizations as part of our protection and advocacy for voting access funding already have a mandate to support audits of accessibility for polling places. That is something I have done on an individual per request basis. Obviously, the municipalities that call and ask for my input are not necessarily the ones where we are going to find the biggest problems. The biggest problems are going to be in places where they think everyone is fine.

So I guess kind of the thing that brought me here today other than being excited to make new friends is I would really like to start talking to the CILs potentially on an individual level or via this coalition or both about the possibility of partnering with us and Detroit disability power to expand audits across the state in the coming election year. Part of their thinking in this process is that for Michiganders very often when they hear about problems in Detroit or Metro Detroit, they think about them as Detroit problems. They don't think about them as statewide problems. It's easy for people to be dismissive or seductive and say well it's Detroit, it's corrupt or it's whatever. That's not what is happening here. That's not ‑‑ you know Southfield is not Detroit and they had the same problems.

Warren is not Detroit and down river and I promise I have been up north, and the same problems are there. We can't account for those problems especially on election day unless we have a network of people across the state to, sorry, I just had another brain blip there unless we have a coalition of people across the state to support the reviews because it's an intensive process. It's not something you just kind of wing. You have to know what you're doing. You have to know what your rights are in the process and have to be able to work with the polling workers to make sure that you get that audit done successfully. So that's kind of my big pitch in all of this. And Steve seems to think you might be on board for a little more of this. I know in the past I have talked to folks at Disability Network Mid‑Michigan in the Midland area. And they said this is actually something they have done in the past already. So, I'm sure there are lots of other CILs who have done similar work, Theresa shared the DDP report so you all can look at that. But, yeah, so one of the big things that I think that we could potentially collaborate on is this kind of widespread effort to audit for accessibility. So, I guess kind of my main pitch, I don't really have a lot more to share but would be happy to answer questions if anybody has any.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you so much, Rachel, we really appreciate your time today. This is Jamia speaking by the way. Does anyone have any questions for Rachel? Or any comments?

>> MINDY KULASA: Jamia, one moment.

>> I’m not on the Council but can I have permission to speak?

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Who is speaking, I'm sorry?

>> YVONNE FLEENER: This is John, I'm sorry.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Yes.

>> YVONNE FLEENER: I'm the only CIL director in the room right now so I can't speak for everyone. And I believe virtually I'm the only one here too. But I would be happy to share this information at our meeting next week. I know Steve can do that too. I can tell you from our CILs that we are excited and supportive of this. And have done our own work in the voting accessibility issue. So, thank you for that opportunity. And how would you like us to let you know that we are interested? Reach out to you? Rachel?

>> RACHEL PREVATT: Yeah, I will put my contact information in the chat, and I will also make sure that Tracy and Steve have it so that they can pass it along as well. But, yeah, I think for right now my main plan is to just sort of gather and see where there is interest. Seeing where folks feel like they can do it whether that is independently, like you said, a lot of CILs have done work like this on their own. So, I'm not inventing a wheel. Or you know if you need support, training, whatever that looks like, that is also something we could help with. At this point I'm information gathering. I will put my contact in so that folks can reach out. And I'm really excited to see where this goes. It's been a wild two years in voting advocacy.

>> YVONNE FLEENER: Thank you this is Yvonne again. I also will talk to our chair of Disability Network to see about having you come in to say the same thing directly to the directors so they can hear it from you rather than me. So, I will follow‑up with you on that.

>> RACHEL PREVATT: Yeah, great. Also, the reason that I met the folks at the CIL in Midland was they had me come for a general outreach voter education and that is something I did not mention I'm available for. If your CIL would like to host a voter education event I can speak or speak remotely or help you connect with your municipal or county clerks or Bureau of Elections to do demos of the voter assist terminals so use me as a resource. I know this is already a very well connected and vibrant network and don't want to assume you need my help but I'm happy to help wherever I can.

>> This is Paul at Disability Network Southwest Michigan what is the biggest problem you have seen as far as voting access?

>> RACHEL PREVATT: That is a great question. First, I do want to say that AAPD‑rev up does a pretty exhaustive poll after every election and encourage everyone to look at their data because it's probably the most concrete information you can find on this issue. Based on what I see the constituents I speak to, the work that we do, the two biggest issues I'd say the biggest for physical accessibility is parking and curb cuts. So just parking lots are in about the same shape as roads in Michigan. And that's not really good for people who have mobility limitations or who use assistive devices and may have issues with potholes. That is the biggest physical accessibility issue is just having a safe level place to park and a safe level path to the building. I would say other than that the issue we hear about most is the sort of the interpersonal contacts that people have with election workers. And those vary a lot. We've heard stories where people have been treated as though they were intoxicated by election workers who have been told they wouldn't be allowed to vote because they were obviously not capable of voting. We've had stories where folks talked about election workers getting angry with them because the vat or the tabulator didn't work. We've had people report being ignored, spoken down to, you know all of the sort of typical unfortunately things that come with living in an ableist society. But I think that people feel that in a really intense way with voting for a few reasons. First of all, we all have this right and it's a very fundamental like Americans think of voting as such a fundamental part of what it means to be an adult and a citizen. And I think that really makes it a tender subject when folks get blocked or feel like they are not treated with respect. I think the other thing is it just makes a person feel erased in a way. You know, like you are not as important. Like even the people who feel moved to work as election workers are treating you as though your right to vote isn't the same as others. So, I feel like there are a lot of variations in those experiences. Sometimes it is absolutely just hostile, negative, bad faith behavior on the part of the election worker but it's fear and anxiety and we are trying hard to do the work of fixing that so individual voters don't have to. We really want people to feel safe voting and there are already a lot of reasons that people don't feel safe in the poll, but we don't want disability to be one of those.

>> I have experienced some of that second-class citizen capacity.

>> RACHEL PREVATT: Yeah, it's horrible.

>> Where they lost pieces or headphones.

>> RACHEL PREVATT: Yes, I had Eric who is in our video wouldn't mind me talking about this because he loves to talk about it. Eric in our election worker video is a voter in Flint and went years and years without voting because they did not have appropriate equipment and needed a device working with a sip and puff because he is paralyzed from the shoulders up. And we finally worked with the city of Flint and made sure he got to vote before the pandemic in 2018. And then when he went back to vote in person in 2020 or no, I'm sorry in 2022, they didn't have the equipment that they had had four years previous. The election workers couldn't figure out where the sip and puff equipment had gone. They couldn't figure out how to help him and they became increasingly defensive.

And Eric was told they only have that machine for him anyway and if he wants to use it, he should call ahead. That is a whole pile of wrong. It's like multiple kinds of wrong. But, yeah, those issues, it's frustrating because you know it's a piece of tubing or something that if people just took a second to make sure that piece of tubing was there it makes all the difference for that individual voter. And it doesn't really cost anybody anything extra to be prepared for that.

>> Thank you.

>> RACHEL PREVATT: Yeah.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Rachel. Does anyone else have any questions or comments for Rachel? And this is Jamia speaking. Hearing none, thank you so much, Rachel. We really appreciate your time today. And now we are going to move forward with the next item on our agenda, which is the Disability Network Southwest Michigan presentation by Yvonne Fleener, who is the Executive Director.

>> YVONNE FLEENER: Thank you, Jamia. And welcome everyone. We really appreciate you taking a trip around the state and hosting your meetings at different CILs. I think that is fantastic. And as you can see, we have quite a few of our CIL people here. And I think that is certainly the way to field these locally so thank you for doing it.

People are here voluntarily. Nobody had to be here. They chose to be here. But because they are here, I've asked almost all of them to speak. So, I would say little and ask them to speak on behalf of our CIL. I do want to start with just a kind of opening. This past year I have given public comment at this meeting before that we made a decision to move away from a large contract with Michigan rehab services. And we don't need to go into that again.

But because of that it really created an opening for us to really think about what's our future look like. How do we best serve people with disabilities in our eight counties? And so that led to strategic planning which also led to rethinking our vision and our mission. So, I just want to share with everyone today because we are pretty excited about it. Our new vision is a fully accessible community where disability is valued as human, diversity and everyone belongs. Our mission is that we are people with disabilities advancing justice, access, and inclusion for the disability community. We've developed five core values which are disability pride, inclusion, independence, diversity, and connection. So, I can go on and on about that because it's exciting. But I won't.

Our strategic plan is close to the work in progress but there are key areas I just want to identify. One is a focus on rural outreach. We have very rural counties in our CIL and so we want to make sure that we are finding ways to really reach people by being in their communities. Not having the expectation that they have to come to us to get the services. Related to that is reaching the BIPOC community and LBGTQA communities. That is a big part of our incoming strategic plan. Systems change work and policy work. We do that already. But it will be a little more intentional, a little more focused. And then we are launching absolutely accessibility Southwest Michigan and Rachel is on the call includes accessibility and really working with our communities to create communities that are accessible for everyone. We all know that everyone benefits the more accessibility there is, disability or not, everyone benefits from that. So excited to really get going on those efforts too and more to come on that.

On the service side is really enhancing our one-to-one services, increasing staff levels in that area, increasing peer support work. Looking at youth and young adult leadership. And much, much more. But with that I'm going to turn it over and let the people in this room who do the work every day really just kind of share some examples of that work. And Paul is going to talk about a statewide effort that our CIL and the Grand Rapids CIL were involved in, that I think will be really impactful to the future of people with disabilities so Paul, I will hand it off to you.

>> Part of my job is systems advocacy which is different than individual advocacy. I work with systems as opposed to individuals that come in for say looking for affordable and accessible housing. I don't do that. I work with the people that sort of make it like Michigan State housing development authority, MISHDA. One of the things that used to be in place that I think a lot of people heard about was section A housing which is what used to be made for people who get affordable housing. That is not around anymore. What they do now is low-income housing tax credits. So, developers can get tax credits which lower their taxes and gives them more profit. And it's competitive. You have to win what MISHDA values to get the tax credits. And MISHDA has in place what they want the developers to build on is usually done through what they call qualified allocation plan. All these different values have different points. So, if you meet these things MISHDA will be happy, and you will probably get the tax credits. One of the things we have been fighting for, for years is more, not just affordable but accessible housing and has not been a lot there. This year they have actually made a step forward for the qualified allocation plans and given it points for greater accessibility for housing. It used to be just the bare bones bottom line, which is what the Fair Housing Act demands. That is the worst you can do and still be legal. It's not accessible, frankly. Because accessibly frankly is universal design. But that takes up a little more space. It's a little more expensive but sort of like the city here does is you have to have at least a 36" wide sidewalk. Well, they set it up in their ordinance you have to have a five-food wide sidewalk. Why? Because it's more user friendly. It's better. You can go two ways. You can walk side by side. You can't do that on a 36" wide sidewalk.

So, they spent the extra money. MISHDA stepped up to the plate and offers more points now for more accessible housing. And that was a big effort that took many years, mainly because we didn't have the language down. They thought they were doing great because they were meeting the law. And until we started saying that that's the worst you can do and still be legal, they didn't get the picture. And so that other kind of being able to build more affordable, accessible housing sort of more like an assisted living spaces or for nursing homes. They have an attorney radius that Fair Housing Act Type B units does not have. If you use a wheelchair you can go into a room which they have to back out of it. You couldn't turn. Which isn't something you like to use and enjoy. It's something you tolerate. And so, this is a big step forward in MISHDA. That is our systems advocacy.

>> This is Holly, speaking of systems advocacy and youth development, I'm going to talk about a program we have at Disability Network called advocacy academy. Our advocacy academy is an 8-week paid internship in the summer for young people that are age 16‑29 years old. They meet three days a week. This year we had seven interns. The first two weeks of advocacy were spent on education. So, we talk about disability history. IL philosophy and talk about disability pride, disability language and etiquette and also learning about advocacy. So, after the first two weeks of the education piece, they get to do an advocacy project. So, as an example our interns this year chose ISK which is our community mental health in Kalamazoo education reform. And they chose to advocate to have people with disabilities included in the direct, in the training of direct service staff. Long story short they were asked by the directors at ISK to review all the training materials to make sure the disabled voice is included in those training materials.

Last year the group advocated for disability awareness and education day. This is now recognized in Michigan on October 21st every single year. We had tons of different examples.

We've had groups advocate minimum wage for employees with disabilities. We've had groups advocate for disability history to be taught in the schools. So overall when they are done with their advocacy projects to wrap up every year the interns' final project they present to the staff, friends, and family, community members. And community partners. They have a presentation of what they have done. My experience is it's extremely positive and has really made a difference, you know, grass roots advocacy. So, Ann, do you want to talk about peer support?

>> Hello, my name is Ann. I'm going to talk to you a little bit about peer support here at Southwest Michigan facility. So, I think on this call everyone is familiar with the IL philosophy, the doors of independent peer support being one of those. When I think of the mantra, I think about us without us I think peer support and when we think about intersectionality and the overlap in the community, what I see happening in recovery and addiction, also with post incarceration and efforts to overcome societal barriers. We are really looking for support. Even since 2011 we are seeing that there is advocacy. We know that for disabilities such as depression and anxiety we will see a decrease in hospitalization. We will see a decrease in reliance on medication and increase in life satisfaction and you will see an increase in community engagement. So, if Pfizer created a pill or an injection to give people these things, we know we would be taking it. And so, I just see Independent Living Centers as really like we have been doing it from the beginning and see the need. Here in Southwest Michigan, we have the brain injury associations, second longest chapter, 40 years this year and only two weeks behind Kent county's. So long established. We have phenomenal women which meets weekly, no, yes, I think they meet weekly, yes. That is open to any woman who identifies with any disability. So mostly social on that aspect. We have the chronic pain group that meets virtually, exclusively on Zoom. That again is open to anyone who identifies as having, dealing with chronic pain. What we found in that instance is there may be groups that address chronic pain such as fibromyalgia, recovery, and addiction but exclude others dealing with pain for other reasons. So, this group really tends to those people. We have adults with autism. This is another need that we saw in our area. And there are programs in place for children in Michigan. I think because there are dollars allocated. But once they age out of the education system, there is really nothing supplied to address those needs for socialization. And so, a member on our staff who identifies as neuro diverse saw the need during the pandemic and said, hey, why don't we offer this. And we have. And it's just been super well. We would also say that I think our volunteers qualify as a peer group because they created a community. All of our volunteers here at Disability Network Southwest Michigan would identify as having a disability. So, they meet weekly, and they check in with each other. They report on the highs and lows. They are creating a big space where there is emotional support in place. We also have just started a new peer group. This is a little different. It's being offered to caregivers in collaboration with the Alzheimer's association. One of those members in our community with Alzheimer's had a brain injury. So, while these are not our direct customers, we are hoping to support our customers by filling the gaps of those who offer direct care. So, if we can assist them with being better resourced, we know that our customers will reap those benefits.

So, I just think when I want to leave you with this one last kind of thought. Yesterday we met weekly and also, we offer both in‑person meetings, hybrid meetings like this one, and virtual. So, we are just trying to reach those people that may have barriers for whatever reason. Anyway, during our meeting yesterday we had a professional come in, an occupational therapist sharing with the group, that often happens. Mostly it's social, emotional support but sometimes we will bring in education too. One of the members came up to me. She is newer. She has been attending for two months. She took me by the hand. She looked me in the eye. And she said, "thank you so, so much. I cannot tell you what this group has meant to me these past two months."

She was involved in a motor vehicle accident 13 months ago. She has overcome some you know like she was in a coma. She had to learn to eat, to walk, to talk, the landscape of her life has been completely changed. Most recently her significant other has decided, you know, he no longer is her person. That was pretty devastating to her. But attending this group she says I just see people embracing life. I know that my life is not over. My life is what it is. And I'm embracing it. So, she said that to me. She came up two more times. So, she looked me in the eye. There were though tears. It was just a sincere thing and when I get up in the morning and show up. I don't think there is anything I mean like a voice to people who don't have a voice. It allows them to practice thinking about their needs. Seeking victories and things they are happy about. Things in which they are growing. They are learning. And then they become advocates. So that's my little, short.

>> Hi, everyone, I'm Lisa. The other group that Ann just referenced is called spirit club. We paired up with spirit club in Maryland to offer a fitness program that is done virtually on Monday mornings. And that started two years about two and a half years ago actually. Still at the very beginning of the pandemic where people didn't have access to socialization opportunities or definitely not exercise and gyms and all of that. So, this has brought movement into their life. And they also then have access to the on-demand library of videos that they could do in their own time. But once a week it's done virtually. We have also gone further in the field and gone to day centers for developmentally disabled adults or senior centers or apartment complexes that work with people with disabilities and older adults so that is the peer support group.

>> My name is Mona and my colleague Miranda Grunwell the coordinator for community education is not here so I'm going to share a little bit because she is at a training. So, in terms of community education, we solicit information from individuals in the community groups and what would be value added to that. To learn more about related to disability justice, disability rights, inclusion. And so, some of the different presentations we do that we've had organizations say we want to have our own organization trained in this are things like ableism. And then some organizations do ableism 102 to really dig deep because it's so entrenched in our society. We had a presentation on neuro diversity and had different groups even outside of Michigan and I think a group outside the country too that we are like oh, my goodness we need this information. So of course, presentations like that we are getting the voice of people who are neural divergent. That is what we do. 30 different offerings such as does and don't of assistance animal, disability language and etiquette. We provide both to different organizations within the community and I think this fiscal year we provided about 65 that are free to the public. That they can attend virtually. So, we offer a wide selection to try to get allies in the disability rights movement to try to support people who are feeling left out to know you belong and we are here to try to connect you and also work towards a system advocacy. So, thank you.

>> I'm Lisa Fuller. I’m here to speak a little bit about our information and referral program. It is one of our core services. So, the program is still called information referral. But our specialists that work in this program have changed their name to community resource specialist to align with what used to be called an airs organization just to align with them and kind of really encompass the work that that staff does. I have been at Disability Network Southwest Michigan for about two and a half years. And I listen to the staff. And INR talks about how INR has changed even preCOVID. And the intensity of those calls. We still do a lot of just information and referral. Providing little bits of information or providing a customer with a home number to another agency that can help them with their needs. But we go way beyond just information and referral at our CIL. And is speaking to other CILs, INR programs, they are seeing similar needs in their community. That is one of the things we do. Is we listen to the needs of our community.

We help people navigate the systems that we are trying to work within. Whether that is local or governmental, we help them access those services. And we also help them connect to those.

We all know that in our community across the state homelessness is an issue. And so, we do see an increase in that population coming to our agency for assistance. Although the data that we find is really outdated by at least a decade, we know the homeless population is probably anywhere from 20 to 30% of them identify with a disability. And we know that is even higher now after the pandemic because we know across the board mental health disability has increased over the last four years.

Probably one of the best ways to give you an insight is just to share a story about one of our customers and how complex that is and how it's more than just INR.

I'll call our customer Jeremy. We connected with Jeremy at our local day time shelter and Sara, one of our INR specialists for community resource specialist, Sara goes there once a week just to meet people where they are. We want to remove the barrier from having to walk several blocks to our location, so we have staff there once a week to meet with people with disabilities. So, Sara connected with Jeremy back in February of this year. It started out with what we thought was just the same old thing. He wanted to apply for SSI. Jeremy is 26 years old. And his disability is he has grand mal seizures. We are not sure if he had a final diagnosis and is under the care of a neurologist. So, he's not really saying he has epilepsy but assumptions there. At 26 years old he has this disability, and he is homeless. Because he does not have parents any longer and his grandmother is not able to understand or take care of Jeremy. Sara met him. He decided, yes, he wanted to apply for SSI. That led to Sara helping him get a phone because he did not have a phone. Sara also walked with him to go to two separate Court dates that he had at Court. Because Jeremy cannot cognitively map out how to get someplace. Jeremy cannot always remember where he needs to be or why he needs to be there. Sara talked to Jeremy, and he was interested in working. Sara connected him to MRS. Sara also followed up with him on his disability determination appointments. Walking with him to that appointment in the rain to make sure that he got there that day. She has helped him twice since February get his food assistance card. Because every time that Jeremy has a seizure or needs to call EMS to come and get him, they take Jeremy to our local ER but don't always take Jeremy's belongings. So, every time Jeremy leaves the ER, he does not have any of his belongings because they are left behind on the street where he is during the day. So, we have to start over with helping him get vital records. His food assistance, card, whatever it is. We are working on things that we can do to help him with that.

So, one of those times when Jeremy left the ER, he didn't even have shoes. So, Sara went to one of our local agencies that provide clothing and picked out shoes and clothing for Jeremy and took them to the day shelter for him so he could have shoes. On Wednesday of this week at 4:05, which is five minutes after Sara is done working, she received a phone call from Jeremy's social worker at the day shelter. Who said, "Jeremy has been accepted into one of our temporary shelters called Oakland house."

But Jeremy needed to get through by 6:00 at night and nobody knew where Jeremy was. So, Sara asked me as her supervisor if she could go look for Jeremy. And I asked her, “What are you going to do when you find Jeremy?” She said his worker at the day sheller agreed to come and pick him up. So, Sara went, and she knew because of her connections doing the outreach she knew some of the other people on the street and she was able to ask one of them, hey, do you know where Jeremy is? And they said, yes, he is at the bus station. Sara went to the bus station. Found Jeremy. Told him this marvelous news. She called his worker at the day shelter who came right over and took Jeremy to Oakland house.

Jeremy is now housed. So, he wakes up every morning in a safe, dry environment. That is the kind of work that we often do in making those connections. That was in February and well over 30 hours of Sara's time to continue to meet the needs this customer had. That is one of our success stories. That is what we do at our CIL. That is what we do in information and referral. Which really needs to be changed on information and referral. Thank you for your time today.

>> Last, yeah, so I'm going to end our presentation about Disability Network Southwest Michigan on the topic of wellness. And whether staff are providing direct service delivery, systems advocacy, our staff of course are extremely passionate, go above and beyond. And sometimes it's really difficult to take care of ourselves when we are trying to help in all these different efforts with disability justice. This year we took a really proactive look at how we can promote wellness. And so, with wellness research shows that when people have higher wellness not only are they happier as humans, there is an increase in performance within the workplace. So, our effort, and vote because colleagues care about colleagues and also when there is that performance that is a great thing too. And so, it impacts concentration, memory, decision making and problem solving. In terms of when there is a higher well‑being people have greater capacities for creative thinking, curiosity to say what if and push the limits. Push the end when you're trying to work for justice. Resilience, flexibility, agility, and self-awareness.

Some of the protective factors for well‑being and performance are things like having an effective work‑life balance or work‑life harmony. Being able to cope with uncertainty bouncing back from challenges. Confident in decision making and being able to stay more task focused. To promote wellness and we are still working on this for sure. To promote wellness some different things we were doing internally as an organization for this calendar year we ensured we had a really strong benefits package. And so there is short term disability of course by the employer. There is the employer assistance program. And we had a speaker come in to share about this. And so that people know this is a resource for you. Whether it's virtual counseling or in person counseling, some of the resources on their website. At this office we have a self-care space that has different diverse logistics to it. So, there is some quiet space for people who might want to have some time without all the sensory input. There is some exercise equipment. Massage chair. Then we try to have snacks with some healthy options for people at all three of our offices.

In the new fiscal year this will be kind of a surprise for some staff here, so in year two we recognize that wellness is individualized. And so, I learned a while back when one of my colleagues said to me Mona there is this app on oculus and had to explain what that is, a virtual reality piece where I can explore places like the Grand Canyon. That is amazing. This person happens to be a wheelchair user so certain exploration of certain places that may not be as accessible to him he can do it virtually. That is a great idea for a wellness list. This fiscal year this upcoming fiscal year we will have individualized so they can choose different wellness ideas. For one person having their house clean may be wellness. Someone else the virtual reality app. Someone else exercise equipment. It's just so diverse. So, we are going to be doing that. This summer we highlighted a 36‑hour workweek. Then we had a pretty in-depth survey monkey what were the challenges, what were the benefits to your wellness? What tweaks we can make to make this better? And really helpful input on that. So, we are exploring, is this something that we can do on an ongoing basis of a 36‑hour workweek, so people have greater work‑life harmony. And so those are just some of the wellness pieces we are doing at the topic I'm passionate about. So, thank you for listening.

>> That is awesome.

>> YVONNE FLEENER: This is Yvonne. I hope this gives you a flavor of what we do. With can go on and on as you can tell because we are really passionate about what we do. But since we had your ear, I thought let's just let them know who we are and what we do. And we look forward to a continued partnership with the CIL and thank you for giving us the time to share.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, all. You are amazing and are doing some amazing work. And I was really touched by Jeremy's story. Amazing, amazing work. And I would just say keep up the great work. And, you know, I'm happy to hear that we are all working together all for the greater good. So, thank you all.

Does anyone have any questions for anyone? Regarding the presentation? Okay hearing none, we are going to move forward on our agenda today with the staff and committee reports. And I'm going to be presenting or facilitating Steve's report as the Executive Director. And also, the strategic planning committee report. And so let me just, Tracy, I don't know if I can have it pulled up. I don't think so, but I will just read what I have.

Okay so this is Steve's report dated for today. The first item in his report is the 2024 gap year SPIL. Michigan's 2024 GAP year SPIL was submitted to ACL on June 29, 2023, and was approved in July 2023. The 2024 SILC budget, SILC's budget was negotiated with MRS and BSBP at the end of August with Stephanie and Steve reporting SILC. So today we are going to be presenting you with a budget that's almost 700 less than our current fiscal year's budget. Unfortunately, the DSE was not able to support our request to contribute 45,000 for the 2024 youth leadership forum. SILC staff will work on alternative funding sources with our partners. In terms of the contract and letter of engagement approvals, we will be approval contracts in agreement for the 2022, 2023 audit services as well as the statewide outreach services. And, Tracy, do I pull those up now or do I wait for the new business?

>> TRACY BROWN: We can wait until new business.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, to continue, the 2023 first through third quarter meetings and trainings is the next topic. So far in the first three quarters of the year Steve has participated in a variety of trainings and meetings. Some of those are the peer-to-peer interactive workshops for CILs and SILC and SILC peer discussions facilitated by ILRU, region five quarterly peer meetings, and the Michigan Council for rehab services. And there is a long list of other meetings and trainings that Steve has participated in.

In regard to the 2024 through 2026 SPIL writing team, the SPIL writing team began public meetings again at the end of August to work on the 2024 SPIL and reviewed responses to SILC's community needs assessment survey and gathers public input into the next SPIL. We will be holding town halls via Zoom during the fall and the team will begin meeting more frequently. We have also assigned sections of the SPIL to team members. So far, we have received 107 community needs assessment survey responses. The survey is being promoted to SILC's social media channels and by other partners including the CILs.

The next topic is the CIL director's meetings. Quarterly meetings with the CIL directors have been scheduled where we share collaborative updates. Steve will be meeting with them again this month. The lunch and learn meeting series with each CIL director at their CIL have been completed with relationships strengthened. These meetings were designed to learn more about each unique CIL such as the presentation we heard today with southwest. And how SILC can better partner with them.

Steve will also be meeting with Teri Langley Disability Network of Michigan new Executive Director either on a biweekly or monthly basis.

In regard to the statewide outreach services, we are making great progress with statewide outreach as we promote independent living and the CILs across the state through our monthly newsletter, our online blog, and weekly social media post. We held the inclusive community event in Madison heights in partnership with the city of Madison heights and Disability Network Eastern Michigan with great success. We held a Facebook live event to promote the art as well. We are working on an outreach campaign with Disability Network Southwest Michigan during the month of September and chair Jan Lampman and Steve and guest Joyce Bender's Podcast to talk about the important role of SILC, CILs and Independent.

In regard to appointments, we have new staff in the appointment office and Steve has introduced himself to begin relationship building. We have January 1st, 2024, reappointments coming up, for myself, Jamia Davis, Aaron Andres and Mindy Kulasa. The CIL directors have selected Yvonne Fleener Executive Director of Disability Network Southwest Michigan to be their representative on SILC beginning January 1st, 2024. Yvonne is replacing Mark Pierce and we extend our deepest gratitude to Mark for his service.

For SILC strategic planning after the Council held our annual retreat at the end of August 2022, it was decided that the balance of strategic plan goals will be aligned with SILC goals created in the next SPIL through advocacy related objectives.

A SILC goal writing team has met several times to develop SPIL goals specific to Council activity. The life areas that have been selected based on community needs assessment survey responses are mental health, direct care workers, housing, transportation, and the aging blind population. The CILs are developing advocacy teams and SILC will try to coordinate with them in our efforts.

In terms of the Michigan Council for rehab services, Steve continues to represent SILC on the MCRS. MCRS' mission is to improve public vocational rehab VR services delivered by the Bureau for Services for Blind Persons Michigan Rehab Services. And that concludes Steve's report. Executive report.

Also, I believe that his strategic planning portion was included in that report. So, if there are no questions for me, I can try my best to answer. If not, we will move forward with the financial report presented by Stephanie.

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: Great. If there are no questions I will get started with our financial report ‑‑ this is Stephanie. I will keep it short because we have a lot of new business to cover and in new business, we will be discussing the new budget proposal. So, I'm going to try to keep this short so we can keep things moving but just know we will come back to the budget under new business as well.

So, there are no real things to be concerned about as far as what Tracy just pulled up on the screen is our budget versus actual. You will see in a lot of cases we are just under budget or right about budget. So, there is nothing really to be alarmed about in this document that Tracy has pulled up. But if you do have specific questions, you can either ask now or you can send an e‑mail and either myself or Steve would be happy to talk with you about that.

I do want to let you know that in our Chase Bank account we currently have 51,369.59. And as far as total assets, we have 77,618.92. So those are the big updates as far as our finances go. Again, I will be talking about the proposed budget here in a few minutes.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you Stephanie. I appreciate that report. Let's see where we are on the agenda. So, we have the SILC financial policies workgroup update. Stephanie, do you have anything to report in regard to that?

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: So, we do not have anything to report right now. For those that have been on the Council for a while last fiscal year there was a group of us put together to review our financial policies and got that all done and things are working well. So, we do not have anything to report as far as policies and Bylaws right now.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay wonderful. So, with that being said it is 1:20 right now. And we are going to take about a ten‑minute break. So, we will come back at 1:30 everyone.

Thank you.

[ Recess until 1:30]

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, [ you are on mute Jamia]

Sorry Julie, this is Jamia speaking. We are going to now resume the meeting. In the follow through with the agenda today.

And we are going to start with our ex-official reports. And the first person that we have on schedule is Bill Addison from Michigan rehab services.

>> BILL ADDISON: Good afternoon, can you hear me?

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Yes.

>> BILL ADDISON: Good afternoon, everybody. I'm Bill Addison. I’m a division director for the division located in Michigan Rehabilitation Services. I am a member of the Council. I'm a nonvoting member though and I provide updates for MRS. And I believe Tracy, I sent an e‑mail with some slides on it. Perfect can you open one up for me one at a time. I would like to give you the statistical update of MRS and kind of where we stand in serving customers and how many people we have employed.

First slide is a five‑year comparison of the services that we provide. Prior to application, is before they become an applicant for VR services as an adult, as you can see the five‑year span here, all of this is good news because when the pandemic hit, obviously our numbers went way down. MRS has never closed their doors. We had to use other methods to provide our services. Even despite that, you could see that the first brown line on the top is the number of folks with PTA referral services went way down in those years which we kind of expected that. That all service providers numbers went down. I think the good information though on this is you look on the lower access for August, for July and August you will see they are starting, well, starting more aggressively to come back to MRS for our services. So, this one slide here is very encouraging to us. Again, more people are coming to MRS for services.

If you can go to the next one, please?

All right, new VR applications and what that is is those are folks who come in the door and fill out an application. And, again, it's a good indicator of how busy we will be in the future. Again, it's the same scenario as when the pandemic first hit, our numbers went way down. I think the real positive thing now if you can see the blue line in the middle of the graphic that is the current year, we are starting to catch up with prepandemic numbers already. So, it's very good sign for us.

In August, as you can see when you go down the numbers for the last couple years prepandemic was 1,181. And right now, last month, we are looking at 1,077. So again, all really good news. Again, it shows that more individuals are coming into MRS.

Tracy, if you can go to the next one, please.

Okay eligibility. What eligibility means is after they come in and fill out an application the next step in the process is to determine whether or not they are eligible. And, again, the blue line in the middle their kind of shows where we are right now. And, again, same thing catching up to prepandemic numbers. Numbers have gone way up in the last couple of months. In August we are now 1,006 in August which is close to what we had back in 2019. It's a good indication. Again, more people are coming to MRS for services. You can go to the next one, Tracy, please.

All right IPE services. What an IPE is it's an individualized personalized plan for employment. What it is, it's is plan signed by MRS Counselor and it's the plan that is also signed by our customer and it's exactly what it says. It's a plan of the services that we will provide with the idea that it will end up with an employment outcome. And, again, you can take a look at we are kind of right on again getting close to pre-pandemic numbers again here. The other thing you can see our services or at least the people who come in the door is it's kind of seasonal and goes up in the spring and it usually tapers off when we get closer to the winter months here.

So, Tracy if you can go to the last one, please?

Okay, and this is really important to us. And of course, this is kind of what we are paid for because we are a VR agency. We are responsible for employment outcomes. And, again, the blue line in the middle shows our employment outcomes. And as you can see, we are doing very well at it. We are getting more individuals employed as part of the process. And so very encouraging. We are striving to continue to make that blue line in the middle go up and up. So, the other thing I wanted to report on is we are in the process of issuing 15 CIL contracts starting October 1st. The total amount that is dedicated and people are all on the CIL contracts is 13,760,000 which is an increase from the prior year. We are in the process right now of approving each CIL's budget. We will take to the add board on September 14th these contracts which we believe will all be approved. And what that will mean is that we will have new contracts in place for all of our CILs starting 10‑1.

And that's my update. Any questions?

>> MINDY KULASA: Bill, this is Mindy Kulasa. With new leadership at the helm at MRS, when will MRS be reevaluating its current fee for service structure?

>> BILL ADDISON: Reevaluating, it's always being reevaluated. We are now entering into a contract with PCG to see how we are to structure future rates that we have already developed. So, the answer to that is ongoing. And, again, because every year we probably need to reevaluate rates if for anything else the inflation margin. But the answer to your question is, again, we are diligently working with PCG to establish some sort of methodology for taking our current rates and increasing them. The other thing we are also looking at when it comes to rates is we are trying to do more of a game plan periodically and we would let our vendor community know this, is what times during the year would we reevaluate rates and establish new rates. So, all of those things are on the agenda with our company PCG. PCG is a company we contract with. They are nationwide. They have provided great services for many other VR services or VR agencies in the country.

Does that answer your question?

>> MINDY KULASA: Yes, please. What does PCG stand for?

>> BILL ADDISON: Public Consulting Group. And, again, you can find it online. They may even have some results of doing rate studies for other states. Again, we are not the only one that RSA said we had to look at our rates and how we develop them. Many other states have the same finding that Michigan did. So, this agency is well versed at providing us recommendations on how we ‑‑ how we are to develop our rates.

In fact, the first time through they did the rate development 100% by themselves. And what we did is we looked at how they developed the rates. And accepted those rates and incorporated those in the rate payment system.

>> MINDY KULASA: Thank you, Bill, that answers my question.

>> BILL ADDISON: You're welcome. Any other questions? All right, thank you.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: This is Jamia speaking. Thank you, Bill, for your report. Next, we are going to go to the Bureau of Services for Blind Persons and that will be reported by Lisa Kisiel.

>> LISA KISIEL: Hi good afternoon, everybody. I have just some information to share with you all about our services and a little bit similar to Bill. And I sent you a document that has a little more information in it. I have various versions so. I'm going to send you a different one.

But I will go through that, and we will get it to you.

BSBP I just want to report a little bit on because we do get our Independent Part B grant. It's different than how MRS is able to facilitate that. So BSBP gets our grant amount and it's provided to us directly because we provide services to our customers directly with that money. And so, we are currently serving about 240 individuals in fiscal year 23 to date. Across the state. And some of the examples of services provided are adaptive equipment with rehabilitation technology, assessments for adaptive equipment, computer adaptive technology training, counseling and guidance, interpreter services, glasses, we call lenses and frames, low vision devices, orientation mobility service, transportation, and some occurrence of attendance at our training center.

So that gives you a thumbnail of the types of services we are providing to our customers directly utilizing the grant amount we are given.

Some service data is available to us. Currently as of August 31st we were serving 975 individuals in our BR program. That is definitely an increase of the services that we ‑‑ I'm sorry of individuals. So like Bill said our numbers are also going up. And we are looking at, you know, from prepandemic to post pandemic we are kind of getting back up to where we were.

And maybe even moving towards being even higher. So, we are serving 312 students with disabilities. 663 adults. And our average case load size is 57 individuals. Which for any of you who are seasoned in VR that is a little low. So, I know when I had a case load it was probably closer to 70 to 80. So, it's a little low. But my Counselors would tell you they appreciate that because they have more time to spend with their customers.

So, during the program year 2022 which is 7122 through 630 of 23BSBP assisted 79 individuals in obtaining competitive integrated employment. Last program year we assisted which would be the 21‑22 timeframe BSBP assisted 60 individuals so that number is also going up words. And as it should. And so, we are excited about that. Just some clarity in some of the occupations, you can see that there are auditors. There is, I skipped that chart, but that is okay.

Because it's confusing because it's from a different order. Auditors, chemical engineers and customer service and prep workers and low vision therapist. So, it kind of gives you ‑‑ I don't need to read them all and it gives a list of some of the examples of folks that were close in the order, you know, actually April to June. So, we are just kind of getting all of ‑‑ that is the closest order I have for you because we are actually in the middle of quarter two of, I'm sorry quarter one of program year 23. So, I don't have that data yet. But that is the most recent. Then comparing that with last year's data, you know. You will see similar positions. But then some additional ones. Randolph Shepherd is our business enterprise program, et cetera. So just giving you a little touch of what that looks like. Some of the highlights for BSBP. We are getting some technical assistance. Some off-site training regarding supported employment. So how we can better serve individuals with multiple disabilities who can benefit from our services and also working with our community resources such as ISK and others around the state to better serve them. Helping Counselors to understand better how to identify a person who might be appropriate for supported employment. Blindness is a significant disability but may not be the most significant disability. There may be other disabilities in addition to blindness that create a formula for a person who needs some pretty specific services that might require some follow along.

And they will be doing an onsite visit on October 23.

The field continues to be challenged. We do have human resource challenges. I talked to van about some of that in the year. Recruiting is definitely a challenge. Our central region manager went back to education and is the director of special education and reenters the pension program and who can say no to that. BSBP remains committed to customized employment. Customized employment is a joint opportunity between MRS and BSBP where we provide just as it says very customized services to individuals who have either been unsuccessful with placement options or have never worked. You know, I loved your success story, Lisa. And I will share just a snippet we work with a gentleman who is 45 years old. He has never worked. And because of the customized employment process he is now working almost full time. And doing a job he loves. And he had no useful work experience prior to that. So, in the automotive industry.

So, we are definitely moving forward with that. Although it's been a slow go for customized because we struggle with our provider community understanding that customized employment is not quick and easy. It's not a beg place and pray model. It's not take them out today and get a job tomorrow. There is a discovery process which is kind of like a person-centered plan. It has been tense. It's really about getting to know your customer. Really getting to know what they love, what they don't, what they are good at, what they are not. Interviewing people this their lives. Getting to know the perceptions of others. Getting to know, doing some informational interviews. Learning about their, you know, helping them to learn about things that they are interested this. That they may not have had other opportunity to do. So, it's intense but it's not bad.

And we also participate in the community of practice for customized employment too. BSBP and MRS work together with the workforce to help them to serve individuals and employers who want information about disability. Again, efficacy and education help them to understand who we are, what we do and how we can assist a business especially if they want to maintain employment with, incumbent and other people with visual impairment or other disabilities.

And we are also considering topics for the, you know, services for new jobs. We do webinars about the employment and training through LEO labor and economic opportunity. So, we are looking at some topics for consideration for our constituency regarding, again, VR services being one. Assisting state employers in accommodating employees, et cetera.

The 2024 combined state plan development so you are doing the SPIL. We are doing what is called the state plan. It's a four‑year cycle. And we are writing our new state plan. And we had a previously it was a unified state plan. It is now a combined state plan because we added the trade association to the plan. So, they will be a contributor to our state plan as a workforce innovation opportunity act including all titles which we are title four. So, we are working on that. So, we will begin gearing up for some pretty serious writing here within the next few weeks. Through the month because we have a January deadline, so we need to get that out for public comment, et cetera.

BSBP director with the input of FSD and the training center. And training innovation policy and procedure unit has contracted with the institute for community inclusion for the University of Massachusetts. Boston. To turn attention to engagement for VR customers and our workforce development partners. And we are looking at a rapid engagement policy. So, one of the things we are doing is that we have revamped our application for services. So that now it will be an acknowledgment of application and will not require a signature. It is not federally required to have a signature on your application. And so, we have sort of reinvented that. Or we are in the process of doing so. So that basically if you reach out for services from BSBP we can initiate that and gather information and we will send what we call a letter of acknowledgment that says we understand you are interested in services, and we done have to send it for a signature and get it back. It spells out information about what is your commitment to the process. What are you interested in doing? Are you really interested in employment? Are you willing to do the work that is necessary to do that? Because VR is not like education. It's not an entitlement program. So, it's absolutely eligibility driven so the motivation has to be behind that. We will help you with services and resources to help you to get there because there needs to be that commitment we may need you to do tests or do medical tests, vision tests, we might need to do work assessments or ask you to do workplace learning, which is adjusting to your disability, learning Independent skills, et cetera. There is a lot. And I think there are a lot of great outcomes to it but it's not a situation where you can apply for services and it's true for all of us here and expect these great things to come to you without, you know, that investment of sweat equity if you will.

So, we are excited about that. And then of course the comprehensive assessment of rehab needs. The statewide comprehensive needs assessment, which is actually facilitated by Michigan State's Project Excellence. We just finished that. And so, we have that report. And that helps us to understand and identify individuals who are unserved, underserved areas where we need to focus energy and also areas where we are doing well. So that is a document. It's about 150 to 200 pages worth of data. It is publicly available. If you would like to have it, we can certainly help you to get that. MRS has it. I'm not sure if we posted it yet because it just came out. But if it's not it will be.

And then I just you know always I ask my assistants to add our core services. You know, here I heard some of you mention about core services but here are some of the core values not core services but core values we think about accountability, reliability, client focus, demand driven, employment, diversity and inclusion, efficiency, excellence, integrity, honesty, positive mental attitude, safety, teamwork, transparency, open communication, trust and respect. So those are sort of the BSBP core values. And our director put together these five pillars. There are four, sorry, I guess I invented one. Don't tell, okay.

You're not recording this, are you? I don't know what it would be. Together I heard you are doing some strategic planning. But number one is physical responsibility and accountability. Obviously reasonable. Reasonable rate. Reasonable applicable and necessary. Allowable and necessary. So, does that mean the services we are providing are reasonable? Are they allowable under Federal regulation? Are they allowable, do we have the funds to do it and are they necessary to the rehab process? So, we have to think about that and all of our decisions. And it's codified in the terms of the BSBP's Federal grant agreements. And reasonable, allowable and services models and processes. Thinking about doing those, you know, those technical assistants with supported employment. With rapid engagement. You know and looking at always improving our processes. Modernization. We are actually going through a migration to a new case management system. So, we are ‑‑ we have been with Leiber Technologies or Leiber, Inc. since I started this job in 1994 with system five at that time. I think you were an intern of ours Mona and probably used that system. We are upgrading that system called informed. It looks completely different. It's web based. It’s much more intuitive. Drop downs. And Bill Robinson says our current system looks like an access database. I haven't used access so I can't speak to that. He has and he says that is what it looks like, okay I trust you. We are right in the middle of that working for an October 2nd launch. We are inundated with forms and letters, and do you want it to look like this or do you want it to look like this. Do you want to say this or this? What letterhead do you want, what size font do you want, where do you want it to be housed?

I dream about it. It's not probably good dreams. I wake up in cold sweat dreams. But in some sense, it's an opportunity, right, that is where you know when we had to upload the new application for services, we took that as an opportunity to build what we thought made sense. So that's you know our modernization.

Then next generation leadership. I've been with the Bureau 29 years and change. It will be 30 years in April. I'm not going to be here 30 more. So, what is the talent coming up, behind us? What does that look like? And helping to build that leadership. We always say you should lead from where you are. So, wherever you know, and with this migration process, great example, we have brought user groups. We have a super user group.

We brought rehabilitation Counselors. We brought vision rehab therapists and brought managers and admin. We brought I mean at this point I'm like, hey, you come here. I need your help. It's kind of like that. But we want people that are doing the work to be involved in the decisions because they're on the ground doing the work. And so, who better to hear from than those people? And sometimes we produce things, and they go oh, yeah, not in this lifetime. It doesn't work like that. We need to hear that. Because otherwise we might be making decisions that are not in the best interests of the people we are served because some of us have not had a case load this a long time. So, there is a lot happening there and we are definitely working hard to recruit. We do have three Counselor positions available in Kalamazoo and two of them are posted. So, if you have anybody who is interested, we would, please, feel free to meander to the civil service website.

So, and then, of course, always focusing on our students. As I mentioned we are serving 312 students. And our list of offers is huge. And Disability Network Southwest Michigan has been a great partner in helping us to administer some of those programs. And as Sigrid Adams said yesterday during the MCRS meeting for such a small agency, you have a lot of offerings. So, we were doing things with culinary arts and hospitality at great wolf lodge and doing a stem camp. We are doing things called camp transition zone. We are doing an I can program. We are doing social used to call it blind and socially savvy but different, you know, programs like that. We are doing lean and prep, helping people to develop their resumes and to help develop internships. And that is really, really great for college students nearing their graduation point. So, there's a lot happening at BSBP. I kind of ran down the list on my way over here of all the things I have. You know how the lottery machine has the balls jumping up and down I kind of feel like that right now. But it's good, you know, it's good to be involved, moving, and shaking and being productive. It may be a call, but we will get there. Got a big training coming up next week with the new information system. So, trying to get that going. We have three days of immersive training that is going to help our staff. Because we go live on October 2. They will have to at least be able to open it up and get started. So, and it's going to be said and you know, I think people might be kind of rolling their eyes at me a little bit saying it won't take that long but I have been around a while. It's going to take that long. We got about a year of just a lot of adjustment, right? You can't go through that kind of change after so many years of the same and not have there be, you know, hiccups and you know, things are not going to work exactly correctly. And et cetera. Our biggest concern obviously is getting our federal reporting data to work right. And so, we will be using the old system in the background for a while to do that. So, anyway that's what is happening at BSBP. Any questions?

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Lisa. Any questions for Lisa?

>> MINDY KULASA: Yes, Lisa, this is Mindy Kulasa. One number that jumped out at me and I think I read it correctly as Tracy was scrolling through some of your report, but the number of the average wage per hour of your customers that are successful in finding employment. I believe it was $16.50.

>> LISA KISIEL: Yes, that is a quarterly average. So that would have been based upon the individuals that were placed in that quarter. So that number is going to ebb and flow depending on the types of jobs people get and when they get them.

>> MINDY KULASA: In general, then, Lisa, how do your customers and how do you as BSBP feel about those wages being a living wage? Are the wages what your customers consider a living wage level? Because when I do the quick math, that equates to about 33,600 a year so 1650 with that.

>> LISA KISIEL: We are shooting for that and have to remember that it’s an average and it's not always everybody working 40 hours a week. Not everyone is giving up their benefits. So, we have some positions that are way up here. And we have some positions that are down here. So maybe someone only wants to work five or ten hours a week.

Maybe someone doesn't want to give up their benefits. Maybe someone isn't, you know, interested in going you know getting additional education, et cetera. So, it's very ‑‑ I like to use the word volatile. Very volatile and very subjective as to the climate of the people that are getting jobs at that time. And I apologize to you because I kind of made a mistake and I actually took that out because I knew that might be difficult for you to ‑‑ I sent her the wrong version. So that is my fault to follow. Because it's very subjective.

In fact, a good example would be labor and economic opportunity asks us to do an operations report and they base it on 40 hours a week. So, when we put our numbers in there, it brings it way down. And it's not even representative of what is accurate. So, but that's a great question because we are ‑‑ we have probably over a hundred students that are in college. If you look at the list of occupations that people are obtaining, you see, you know, there are some engineers in there, there are teachers in there. We are absolutely committed to that. You've heard the Governor talk about the 60 by 30 so 60% of Michigan's eligible residents should have post-secondary training in the years by the year 2030. That has always been a goal of ours. Paul, you can speak to that from way back. We have always been sending people to school. We have the oldest transition in the state with our college prep program, but I appreciate that because that is always a goal. We take into consideration where is the person at in their life and VR does not and cannot and should not require that an individual give up their benefits in order to receive ours. And there are lots of good reasons why people need those benefits. We are not here to say, you know, usually annually we get about between two and 300,000 maybe more in reimbursement for Social Security reimbursement for customers who have left benefits we have assisted in obtaining high‑paying jobs. Some of those reimbursements are a hundred thousand a piece just depending on what kinds of jobs they get.

>> MINDY KULASA: Thank you, Lisa. That was very insightful for us.

>> LISA KISIEL: Thank you.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Lisa. Next, we are going to have a report by Annie Urasky from the department of civil rights.

>> ANNIE URASKY: Hi everyone. This is Annie signing. So first I just wanted to say to Lisa that just sounds fantastic. What a wonderful report. The information that you shared seems to be ‑‑ it was beneficial for me as well.

Just thinking about what you envisioned and your strategies. I've been inspired by what you have been talking about.

Speaking about the new generation of leadership that is so important for us as well to think about who we are supporting now, who we are raising up, who is going to be there after us. That was a very, very touching point and wanted to let you know I was very inspired so thank you for that.

>> LISA KISIEL: Thank you.

>> ANNIE URASKY: Yeah, a few things from our office, a few updates. I wanted to highlight a few key Federal activities that I think are really important for you to be aware of. Maybe many of you already know this. I'm not sure but I wanted to start first today I think at 12:30 today the Department of Health and human services, the U.S. Department of Health, and human services, announced that the 988 suicide and crisis hotline now is going to be accepting ASL phone calls. So, what that means is that that hotline now has a contract for deaf people to provide the video services that we need. For those that need assistance, call 988 hotline number. They just announced this today. So, I'm going to go ahead and post that, thought maybe we could post that on social media and get the word out to the community about that.

There are two Federal actions I wanted to highlight activities. And the first is, hold on one second. There's a few groups of Council men and women who reintroduced the CVTA. And I'm going to explain what that means in a moment. It's the communication video and technology accessibility act of 1923. And that was going to focus on enhancing the new legislation by amending the act to strengthen accessibility requirements related to video, digital access, different things that apply to the deaf and disability community. I will include the link to the legislation there. And the national organization supports the bill as well. So that's good. There are people who either represent the organization or have networked with the disability community that they can contact their federal legislature regarding the bill if you would like to support that.

Next, the other thing I wanted to mention is the department of, one second, I'm sorry the department, I'm sorry I missed. Diversity, justice, thank you, I got it, sorry.

Yes. The department of justice, their process, every so often they will send out what is called, I'm going to use the acronym first and say what it is the NPRM. And that stands for the order of the natural order of oh, sorry, no, okay, other interpreter want to take over? Okay, thank you.

So, it's the notice of the proposed rules made. So, what they are proposing is they want to strengthen the title two requirements for state and local Governments in relation to websites and mobile devices and mobile and web accessibility to make sure that those programs and services are accessible to deaf people and people with disabilities. So, the DOJ has asked for any member of the public or any organization to send in proposals or any feedback and now that's for the proposed rules. And that is why I just wanted to highlight that because the ADA website also includes a simple fact sheet. And just in plain language explain why they are making the proposal changes. What the rules are. Any specifications in regard to the rules. And so, I will have that link there. And I think it's important to, you know, keep an eye on that Federal legislation and highlight that.

So now I'm going to switch back to what our office is doing. I do want to highlight this month, you know, that it's deaf awareness month. September is deaf awareness month so definitely want to highlight that.

And there is actually a legislative bill that was out this week recognizing it as deaf awareness month and the House of Representatives made Matt Kozar, he spoke this week in the opening session. I believe I want to say it was on Wednesday. Yeah. Sorry. This week has been a little crazy. Wednesday. Where they recognized the deaf community and deaf awareness month. So, yes, they put out a newsletter in regard to that. So wanted to inform you.

Also, I wanted to emphasize and highlight some of the things that we have been doing throughout the summer. You know summer is really busy for us. We go to a lot of community events and do a lot of community trainings. And so, this last month was the first time we went to the national Black deaf advocacy conference. And that was really an amazing experience. Because they have not hosted anything since COVID, and it was a really good way to connect with community members there. And it really had Michigan you know representation there. So, there were agency directors that were deaf and hard of hearing, so we posted a policy panel discussion at that conference and invited key people from VR who are deaf and hard of hearing, voc rehab Counselors and that was under RSA. We also invited someone from CESD. CEASD. They oversee, you know, the state schools for the deaf. The superintendents. And then we also had someone from the national association of the deaf that were speaking. And so, it was really key in such a priority to have the awareness and focusing on these different issues and highlighting issues that deal with telehealth, education, and employment within the deaf community. So, it was a really great session.

So, and even the panel was phenomenal. You know, in summary of that, they just talked about policy and everything. If you really want to know and hear about it, I would be happy to talk to anybody about it. My team is doing a fantastic job. We did some summer camps. We talked to deaf, deaf blind and hard of hearing youth at some of the camps and talked about our journey. And you know, just working with them and seeing what their plan is for school and talking about the future. And even next steps. And it's so funny because some of the campers you know had already met us in the school year so then they saw us again at their summer camp and were able to make that connection. And oh, you came to my school two years ago, I remember that. It was great to have the connections with the youth in the community. Several things have been happening in our community. Later this month we will go to the Detroit public schools. I this I that is September 28th. They are going to have a platform with students and parents and everyone within the community and vendors and agencies and so we want to be there promoting services for the deaf and hard of hearing. Also, Grand Rapids is going to be hosting another deaf awareness day. So, we will have a booth there at those events as well.

On September 30th all day an organization in Oakland County called deaf can, they are hosting the largest deaf awareness event of the month. And it's a pretty big event. I mean it's usually over 300 people there. And there are different organizations. There are interpreting agencies, interpreting training programs, and students, health associations, and people from the health system. So, it's a large event.

So, there are two more things I want to say before I wrap up. I wanted to recognize that we are planning to work on for the next fiscal year we are really going to start focusing on increasing visibility within the community. So internally my team worked on finalizing the PowerPoint and the concept and the model. And so, what we are working on is a know your rights training. So, what we will be doing is going into disability organizations and other places that serve the deaf community. And helping people understand their legal rights and advocacy and understanding the language and what is required to get accommodations or services. So, because we are starting to notice issues regionally with hospital systems or certain offices, doctors' offices are forcing deaf patients to use video remote interpreting instead of in‑person interpreters. And the deaf community has asked for assistance with that. How can we be more empowered and advocate for the right and the right to express that they want an in‑person interpreter. And to talk to that person at the front desk, that office manager and let them know what their rights are in terms of their accommodation. And so, like you know it's just going to be a training. You know, basic training. You know, if things go awry and just really get a pulse on the community in different regions to see what is going on. Because different regions are experiencing different things. So, we are going to be doing that in October. So, if you know any organization that would want to be involved in the training or if you, yourself, would like to be involved in the training or your organization please contact me.

And then, lastly, our advisory Council is meeting October 13th. From 1‑4 in Lansing. And our guest speaker I'll send out the agenda once it's approved by the chair. But our guest speaker will be someone from the Michigan Department of Education. They are involved with low incidents outreach. And in terms of the deaf and hard of hearing communities we are going to have a discussion about that, and our Council asked for more updates in regard to that.

But also, they always have we always have guest speakers in terms of licensing control in regard to interpreters. So, we will also have a speaker from that as well. So, I think that finishes everything. If there are any questions. And if there is not that's fine. But I am going to send two links that I will put in the chat. I'm happy to share those.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Annie. This is Jamia speaking again. Next, we will have our report from the Michigan Department of Education, by Shawan Dortch.

>> SHAWAN DORTCH: Hello. I don't know if you all can hear me. I'm at another meeting right now for MTSA. So, our report for the office of special education is not as grand as the other reports. I love hearing about all the events and activities. I wish there were more of me so I could attend all of them. But unfortunately, I can't.

So here goes. The office of special education is starting back with their monthly in‑person meetings with MASE and SEAC and SEIL, that is Special Education Instructional Leadership. And SEAC is the Special Education Advisory Committee. And MASE is Michigan Administrators of Special Education. So those meetings are getting underway the office of special education is also ramping up their technical assistance for ISDs as well as monitoring to ensure students are receiving VAPE in the least restrictive environment. I believe we will start monitoring for that in 2024. So, I think that's about it that we have. I know that we are diligently working with diversity, equity and inclusion in our office and starting to have more conversations and presentations by all committees to subsidy veracity, equity, and inclusion in our office. As well as in the Department of Education and across the state. So, I look forward to seeing what everybody is doing. I feel so excited and energized when I come to these meetings. There is not enough time in the day to get to every place. So, I just want to say you are doing a great job. Thank you.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Shawan. Any questions for her? Okay, so we don't have anyone speaking for the Michigan development disability Council. But yesterday I received an e‑mail that Dr. Yasmina‑Boroi was appointed as Executive Director, so I just want to acknowledge her for stepping up for that position.

And Mark Pierce is not here today. So, I don't think we have an IL network update.

So, the next item on our agenda is SPIL monitoring. And we will have our first report by Theresa Metzmaker on advocacy and leadership.

>> THERESA METZMAKER: Since last time we met, Jon, Steve and I met with the DD Council to talk about YLF and talking to their program committee about possibly doing a YLF next year. After that Jon was supposed to hold his leadership program. I was unaware until I read the minutes or the transcript from the executive committee that he did not hold that. And that is the update I have.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Theresa. Any questions for Theresa?

Okay, hearing none, Mark Pierce is not here today to report on diversity and inclusion. Jan is also not available to report on public care attendants. But what I will do is give a report, a brief report with but Frank left and had to leave early but he wanted me to mention his update on emergency preparedness. SILC continues to meet with CIL partners, organizations outlined in executive report and minutes and the Michigan public health institute. Our focus continues to be on supporting CILs in their emergency management preparedness kit, smart 911B profiles and needs assessments for consumers. We are also collaborating with Michigan public health institute with needs assessment for aging population as it pertains to emergency preparedness. And more updates to come as we continue to meet monthly. And work day to day. So, we will be cognizant of the recent updates with emergency preparedness outlined by the Biden administration. If you have any questions, please he left his e‑mail in the chat.

And so, the BSBP was covered during Lisa's report. And I kind of mentioned the outreach portion in Steve's report.

And so now for new business. The first item is the audit engagement letter with the ALG group. And so let me go ‑‑ if Tracy can pull it up, I can just put ‑‑ make some highlights to that.

>> TRACY BROWN: Okay.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, so just to be brief, we contracted with the ALG group. And we are pleased they are pleased to confirm their understanding of the services they are to provide to the Council for the years ended in September 30th, 2022. 2023 and 2024. So, in addition to that, their objective is to provide an audit as to whether the financial statements provided by the Council are free from misstatement. Whether due to fraud or error, an issue about any auditor's reports. And so I believe with the understanding of this letter we are just stating that we are just agreeing to further contract with the consulting group in terms of our findings. Is that correct? Am I missing anything?

>> TRACY BROWN: I believe that's correct.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, so that's for the ALG group.

Next is our Idea 39 outreach contract. And so, Idea 39 is the contractor that SILC hired to provide outreach services. And as you can see, if you're not aware, Idea 39 has been working with us for the past couple of years to provide social media content, our blog, our website and so forth. And this is just a contract extending into the ‑‑ extending from October 1st, 2023, and ending on September 1st, 2025. After which a new agreement can be negotiated. The suggested media budget is $18,600. For fiscal year 2023. And 2024. And for 18,600 for fiscal year 2024 and 2025. But will be determined on a case‑by‑case basis. So other than that, are we to take a vote on this contract today, Tracy?

>> TRACY BROWN: I believe so.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, does anyone have any questions in regard to this contract? Any comments? Or concerns? Okay, if not, we will ‑‑ can I have a motion to approve the contract as presented by Idea 39 for our contracting services?

>> AARON ANDRES: Motion to approve the contract from Idea 39 as presented.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Aaron. And is there a second in support?

>> GLEN ASHLOCK: This is Glen, and I would second that.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Glen. Can we have a roll call vote, please?

>> TRACY BROWN: Yes. Aaron Andres, yes. Had to leave. Glen Ashlock, yes. Allen Beauchamp, yes. Jamia Davis, yes. Stephanie Deible, yes. Mindy Kulasa, yes. Theresa Metzmaker.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: I think she said she will be right back. I don't know if she is back yet.

>> TRACY BROWN: Theresa, are you back yet?

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: Maybe when she comes back.

>> TRACY BROWN: I think we have enough anyway we have six. So, motion carried.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, all.

Okay.

>> LISA KISIEL: We are not talking about it anymore.

>> TRACY BROWN: If she has questions when she comes back.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: There she is. There is Theresa.

>> THERESA METZMAKER: Yes, I agreed with the motion for the contract.

>> TRACY BROWN: Great, thank you, motion carried.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you.

Okay, next we will have our annual budget approval. And I believe that will be Stephanie if I'm not mistaken. And actually, kind of, okay, sorry.

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: So, Tracy pulled up on the screen the budget that Steve and I went into negotiations with the DSE. So, what you have in front of you is the current proposed budget for this upcoming fiscal year 2024. As you heard in Steve's Executive Director report unfortunately the money, we were anticipating being budgeted for the YLF got rejected. The amount of $45,000 we were hoping for. So that has been taken out of this budget. And we will be working with Steve and hopefully some other community partners to be able to supplement that amount of money. Our hope is to still be able to do the youth leadership forum. We are just going to have to find some other ways. And Theresa, I do know that you have been requesting a meeting regarding financials. And Steve has reached out to ILRU and so at our next Council meeting in January the plan is to have ILRU come and do some education around financials and what we as a Council are allowed to do in regard to getting this in our budget in the future. And just some different things that the Council can use funds for. So, we will be doing a Council education piece in January. I'm sorry. The other big thing on this budget that I do want to draw your attention to is we did budget for a 3% employee cost of living. And currently the state is at 2%. But as you know, or you may not know, I do want to let you know that the Council has authority to set the wages. And our Council chair, who is not here today unfortunately, had to leave, but she is in support of us leaving that at 3%. So, we can have a discussion about that if needed. But as you here in Steve's Executive Director report, this budget is actually smaller than what we had last year by about $700. And because of some of the things, cost of living, we did leave it at 3% now. But we can have a discussion if needed.

Does anybody have any questions about the proposed budget? Or discussion?

>> MINDY KULASA: Yes, this is Mindy Kulasa, Stephanie. I just want to go on record to express my disappointment. I think on behalf of the entire SILC, I would imagine. That funding was not approved for the youth leadership forum. And it's my understanding that the DSE felt that we should only fund SILC operations in accordance with Federal regulations in terms of, quote, unquote, necessary, and sufficient for SILC to fulfill its statutory duties and authorities. Our DSE does not see past the root funds in SILC's budget as falling into that Federal definition. I just wanted to express my concern about what I believe is a very narrowly defined line with respect to the statutory requirements. I think it's a huge disappointment that that did not get funded.

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: Mindy, I can tell you during the budget negotiations I very much tried to express how much the Council was valuing youth leadership forum and also being a former youth leadership forum participant myself, I can speak to the fact that it was so valuable in my life. And we also talked about the real need to develop youth leaders. So, I think, our hope is that we can find a way to still fund it. But also get a structure set in place so it's a year in, year out thing. That is part of the reason we reached out to ILRU to really talk about it. And talk about what we could do. So that this doesn't happen again in the future. Because as we've talked about through many, many of our Council meetings, this is really something that we believe in. And it really when it comes down to it is very much connected to the SPIL. And IL. So and that is what we want to be promoting.

>> MINDY KULASA: Thank you, Stephanie, for your effort to get that approved.

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: Any other questions.

>> THERESA METZMAKER: Stephanie is it true the change in the budget is the match for the 403B contribution?

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: Yes. We did make some ‑‑ we did discuss that as well. And Steve actually went back to our accountant and made some ‑‑ had some discussions and so that is the other adjustment that was made. Steve did verify things with our accountants so that is all set to go as well.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay any other questions for Stephanie regarding the budget for fiscal year 2024?

>> THERESA METZMAKER: Can I ask a question of why that YLF was denied?

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: So, when we were in the negotiation meeting, and Mindy kind of alluded to this, really the DSE's perspective was that they want to be funding our operations. And they didn't see the YLF as part of our operations at this point. So, again, that is why Steve reached out to ILRU to kind of have some discussion about that. But in the interim, Theresa, we are trying to figure out another plan to be able to hopefully fund that. And reaching out to community partners to supplement that.

>> THERESA METZMAKER: Okay, I'd also like to state my extreme disappointment in our partner at the DSE for denying that. And it also kind of goes along the line of some of the other comments that I've made when we talked about budgets like will state only gets this so we think you should only have this. That was mentioned at one of our other meetings. It shouldn't be a comparison. It's a decision made by the SILC. On what they want to put in the budget. I'm really glad we are doing the training in January. But I'm just extremely disappointed and wish that we had looked at what it meant to go into the negotiation ahead of time and a little more, that was one of my concerns two meetings ago. That doesn't sound like a negotiation if they already made up their mind, they were not going to fund YLF before you came to the meeting.

>> AARON ANDRES: Is there any way to look at the schedule or kind of under the eight ball for a budget or something if it's catastrophically not funded?

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: I came into this meeting today with the assumption we need to approve a budget. Obviously, Steve is not here.

>> MINDY KULASA: We do. This is our annual business meeting. So therefore, it does require us to approve the budget for the next fiscal year. Excuse me for interrupting. This is Mindy Kulasa.

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: So exactly what Mindy said. Unfortunately, due to timing we do need to approve a budget today. Obviously, I think if Steve were here, he would chime in and state a lot of what has already been stated. But we are working really hard too, again, I can't state this enough, to find another way to fund it. So, yes, we do need to approve a budget today.

>> AARON ANDRES: Thank you.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you. Any other comments or questions?

>> AARON ANDRES: With that I would make the motion that we approve the 2024 budget as presented. Andres.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Aaron is there a second to approve the motion for the fiscal year 2024, the budget?

>> MINDY KULASA: This is Mindy Kulasa, I will second that motion.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, thank you, Mindy. And may we have a roll call vote, please? Tracy?

>> TRACY BROWN: Aaron Andres, yes. Glen Ashlock, yes. Allan Beauchamp, yes. Jamia Davis, yes. Stephanie Deible, yes. Mindy Kulasa, yes. Theresa Metzmaker, yes.

>> TRACY BROWN: Motion carried.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, everyone, for your votes on the budget. Okay, next we are going to pull up our slate for the SILC officers. And as you can see on the screen, we have nominated for past chair Jan Lampman, Co‑Chair, myself, Jamia Davis. For vice chair, Aaron Andres. Secretary, Stephanie Deible. And for treasurer, Mindy Kulasa. And so, I believe we can take nominations at this time. If anyone is interested in any of the positions.

>> AARON ANDRES: I'm fine with the slate of officers, this is Andres.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, I also concur with the slate of officers as presented. Okay hearing none, may we have the roll call vote for the slate or if there are any other comments before we vote?

>> MINDY KULASA: Was there a question?

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, hearing no other questions or comments, may we have the roll call vote for the slate of officers as presented? For the executive committee.

>> AARON ANDRES: We don't have a motion.

>> TRACY BROWN: We need a motion.

>> AARON ANDRES: I will make a motion we approve the officers as presented, answer.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Aaron. And do I have a second?

>> ALLEN BEAUCHAMP: This is Allen Beauchamp and I second.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: May we have a roll call vote.

>> TRACY BROWN: Aaron Andres, yes. Glen Ashlock, yes. Allen Beauchamp, yes. Jamia Davis, yes. Stephanie Deible, yes. Mindy Kulasa, yes. Theresa Metzmaker, yes.

>> TRACY BROWN: Motion carried.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, everybody. Thank you. Wonderful. I look forward to working with everyone. This has been an amazing team. I think that we have put in a lot of work coming from where when we first started. So, thank you to everyone here and for all of your efforts.

Next, we will have the Executive Director annual evaluation. And I believe we have the comments and the charting from the evaluation to review it once Tracy has it available. Okay.

>> MINDY KULASA: There is a question in my mind with respect to the fact this is a public meeting. And technically speaking, we do have the ability when it comes to matters such as this to have a closed session.

>> TRACY BROWN: Steve chose to have it open. He didn't want it closed.

>> MINDY KULASA: Okay thank you for clarifying that, Tracy.

>> TRACY BROWN: We talked about that.

>> MINDY KULASA: Okay, great.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: So, I believe I will start with the results of the evaluation.

And as you can see on the screen, many people were in favor that Steve is doing a phenomenal job as Executive Director. As far as you know, being a great role model for the staff and the board. That he communicates well and effectively. And, you know, he is a great support to the Council. And he promotes partnership and collaboration and he's always available as a resource. And we are just so grateful to have Steve as our Executive Director. And just so you know, and you see some of the comments there. Steve has demonstrated the ability to put persons with disabilities at the front of all decision making. He has shown dedication to never drift from the fundamental fact that this is what we are all here for. And another comment Steve has been very instrumental and strategic in increasing the visibility of the SILC and CILs.

He has demonstrated excellent leadership towards the Council and all partners. He has been very intentional about the partnerships between the SILC, CIL, and other organizations. To ensure that we keep the disability community first. And all of our efforts. And so, as you can see, there were positive comments across the board for Steve. And we truly do appreciate him. I also want to draw to your attention some of his professional goals for the 2023- and 2024-year fiscal year.

Strategic plan goals, create a work plan with smart objectives for each goal. This work plan will be used to evaluate performance for Executive Director evaluation 2023 in addition to the goals below. So, for the new SPIL, facilitate the creation of the new SPIL writing team with clear timelines and actual plan, and an actual plan for carrying out the stakeholder input process and the writing timeline.

So, with our timeline, the timelines to be complete by September 2023. And we are in the process of starting the writing team and meeting more frequently in the new year. And the SPIL is due to the ACL no later than June 30th, 2024. And in regard to the CIL collaboration and partnership, his goal is to create a regularly scheduled collaborative venue and opportunity for SILC Executive Directors and CIL directors to communicate effectively and share information. And his timeline for that was September 2023 an ongoing and he has been doing or meeting that goal and objective as well. And then for the SILC budget, work with the executive committee and the Council to ensure all funds are available in the SILC budget and are expended before year end to maximize the advancement of the SILC mission. And the recommendation was to provide Steve with a 3% increase in his salary based on the fact that in 2022 and 2023 he substantially met and exceeded all of his goals. So, these are some of the professional goals that Steve had in the beginning of the year. And, you know, we can say that he has met those goals based on his role as Executive Director.

And so, does anyone have any questions or comments in regard to Steve's evaluation?

Okay hearing none. Next, we are going to set the meeting dates and locations for fiscal year 2024. And there is a document, I'm sorry.

>> MINDY KULASA: This is Mindy Kulasa; I believe we need to vote on that.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay.

>> MINDY KULASA: On Steve's compensation increase.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, I thought it was voted on in the annual budget but am I confusing it, his increase in salary?

>> MINDY KULASA: It generally is voted on separately. That has been our practice.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay thanks for the clarification. And so, I would like to entertain a motion to support Steve's 3% salary increase.

>> AARON ANDRES: Motion by Aaron Andres.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, and may I have a second motion to support?

>> GLEN ASHLOCK: I support.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you and may we have a roll call vote please.

>> TRACY BROWN: Aaron Andres, yes. Glen Ashlock, yes. Alone Beauchamp, yes. Jamia Davis, yes. Stephanie Deible, yes. Mindy Kulasa, yes. Theresa Metzmaker, yes.

>> TRACY BROWN: Motion carried.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you all. Thank you all.

Okay see I'm learning here. Thank you for being patient with me. Thank you.

So next we are going to set the meeting dates and locations for fiscal year 2024. And as you can see on the screen, we have our proposed dates for the next year. And so, are we to vote on these, on this slate of dates and locations? Or.

>> TRACY BROWN: Well, we can vote I guess on the date, maybe not exactly the locations. I still have to reach out to the centers to make sure they are willing to take us.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay.

>> We can always come back here.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, so may I have a motion to approve the meeting dates for fiscal year 2024 as presented?

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: Are these Friday still.

>> TRACY BROWN: Yes Friday 12‑3.

>> AARON ANDRES: And the Zoom option.

>> TRACY BROWN: Zoom will always be there, yes.

>> AARON ANDRES:

>> TRACY BROWN: For the past year what we did this past year is how I base the dates on.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, any other comments regarding this proposed schedule? Okay hearing none, may I have a motion to approve as presented?

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: This is Stephanie Deible I make a motion to approve the dates as presented.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Okay, and may I have a second motion to approve the schedule of dates for meetings?

>> MINDY KULASA: This is Mindy Kulasa, I will second that motion, Jamia.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you. Thank you both. And now may we have a roll call vote, Tracy?

>> TRACY BROWN: Aaron Andres, yes. Glen Ashlock, yes. Allen Beauchamp, yes. Jamia Davis, yes. Stephanie Deible, yes. Mindy Kulasa, yes. Theresa Metzmaker, yes.

>> TRACY BROWN: Motion carries.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, everyone. Thank you, Tracy. And now it's time for any information sharing or announcements that are going on in the IL community. So, if anyone would like to share any new events or anything of that nature, you can go ahead at the moment. Okay.

>> MINDY KULASA: This is Mindy Kulasa. I just wanted to mention I read a statistic that was very troubling to me. And it's about the new 988 crisis line number. The fact that only 21% of the people who were polled within the State of Michigan are even aware that this number exists. So that is why I believe for the first-time mental health is going to be a SILC‑led advocacy goal at the statewide level. And I will be leading the charge on that. And we have to do something to improve access and awareness amongst the disability community. I mean, we can't create, obviously, more psychiatrists and more psychologists and therapists. But we can certainly connect people to resources. And make sure that they are aware of them. Because that's very troubling to me.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: I agree, Mindy. I agree. And you know, with that outreach effort and with the Michigan department of civil rights is doing, you know, we definitely have to bring it to the forefront because it is a prominent and ongoing issue at this time. So definitely.

Any other ‑‑ thank you for sharing that, Mindy.

Any other comments or information that we need to be aware of?

>> YVONNE FLEENER: Jamia this is Yvonne I just want to remind people if you can stay on even if you are virtual for a few minutes, we have something we would like to announce and have you be part of. So please join us even if you are virtually.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you. Thank you so much Yvonne.

>> It might be a celebration.

>> I don't know what that would be. Would it be? Not here.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Now we will go into public comment. So, if there is anyone on the line, whether Zoom or in the conference room, that would like to make a public comment, please go right ahead.

>> THERESA METZMAKER: Michigan Disability Rights Coalition

s conducting a survey to better understand the experiences of youth with disabilities in Michigan's juvenile justice system. Young people and their family members or caregivers are invited to complete this survey or contact MDRC to interview via Zoom or phone. Survey Deadline: October 6, 2023. Survey Link: [https://ow.ly/X0RC50PItcA](https://ow.ly/X0RC50PItcA?fbclid=IwAR2aXWpwGGvzliUBsBvigVQw96Ohx8viINm5p8m_w07cbXGpYFd-0pvtSqw)

I would love to send out that survey to all of you. And please spread it far and wide, thank you.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Theresa. We will be sure to get that going.

>> AARON ANDRES: This is Aaron. I just want to thank everyone for the vote of confidence in myself and the other leaders who will take over in 24 and thank everybody else for being here as well. So, thank you.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Thank you, Aaron. Okay anyone else before we make a motion to adjourn.

>> This is Miranda Grunwell. On behalf of myself I want to thank SILC for looking into YLF again. I actually did YLF the very first year as a student. I don't remember what year that was. I was a junior in high school then I stayed on as a mentor staff. I think I've done all the positions over the years. And because of that it was life changing. It changed my career path to where I am. And so graduated college, got involved with the CILs. And now I've been here at Disability Network for 15 years. I've done every job here. And so, it started. So, I was really excited to hear that maybe YLF will get going again and I will volunteer for all the positions again.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Yes, thank you so much for your comment. This is Jamia speaking. One of the things that I brought to the table, that I thought about for the youth leadership forum, you know, to address the personal care attendants need, you know, that we have in this state it starts and they have to be trained up, you know. And we have to, you know, raise up the next leaders for the generation, you know. For instance, I'm 35 next week. You know, so it starts with us then we have to go underneath, you know. So, we have to train the teenagers and the 20‑year‑olds and so forth because they have to learn and we have to continue these efforts, you know, going forward. And we are the new leaders, so I totally agree that, you know, we need to bring this back up. And you know, get it going. And I hope that we can get it funded. Because it is so important. But, yeah, that is just my comment, you know. Not just for personal care attendants but all across the board. There is so much education needed. Because I did not even know about IL prior to joining the Council. So, it's needed.

Any other comments regarding youth, I mean, sorry, regarding anything else for the order? Okay, hearing none, may I have a motion to adjourn?

>> AARON ANDRES: Motion to adjourn Andres.

>> Okay.

>> STEPHANIE DEIBLE: This is Stephanie and I second the motion.

>> JAMIA DAVIS: Motion carries. All in favor say aye.

Aye.

Aye.

Well thank you all to everyone who joined us today, thank you to Disability Network southwest. We really enjoyed you all. Thank you for hosting us. Thank you for the hospitality. Thank you to everyone on the Zoom call as well. All of the departments and also, I believe we have a public constituent and I just want to acknowledge her, Asia, I believe, thank you for joining us today and until next time, thank you.