



**MEETING OF THE  
TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION**

**DATE**

**MAY 9, 2023**

1 Tuesday, May 9, 2023

2 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Good morning, everyone.

3 This meeting is called to order. Mr. Trobman, has anyone signed  
4 up for public comment?

5 MR. TROBMAN: Good morning, commissioners.  
6 Les Trobman, general counsel. We do have one individual who's  
7 registered to provide comment this morning. Ms. Harrison, if you  
8 can go ahead, unmute yourself, and begin.

9 MS. HARRISON: OK. Can you all hear me?

10 MR. TROBMAN: Yes, we can.

11 MS. HARRISON: OK, one second. I'm having a  
12 little trouble. OK. After addressing you about my civil rights  
13 investigation on April 25<sup>th</sup>, the same day my latest investigation  
14 was closed by TWC's stating that I failed to provide details and  
15 had only 10 days to respond. However, April 17 was the initial  
16 date that the intake person emailed me. She did not send me any  
17 documentation of what my rights were or what to expect. Instead,  
18 she gave me ultimatums about what I could discuss if there are  
19 related concerns about the general counsel's sign-off on one  
20 document when his signature appears on multiple versions of the  
21 same form. Because of their bias and long-term hostilities that  
22 are documented, TWC's Civil Rights Division were on such need to  
23 close me out completely if they had not taken time to do simple  
24 math. If I had 10 days to respond and you reach out to me on  
25 April 17<sup>th</sup>, the 10<sup>th</sup> day would clearly be April 27<sup>th</sup>. The director

1 of the Civil Rights Division as well as the general counsel have  
2 both been contacted with this new information but [inaudible]  
3 the director sent a hostile email stating that his staff were  
4 advised not to communicate with me directly. Now that he has  
5 said that there is no way that I can have a fair investigation  
6 going forward with the many issues that I encountered with  
7 before and after my case was filed in court. TWC has not  
8 respected me as a Black woman receiving housing subsidies as  
9 they have used stereotypes and language that was offensive as a  
10 well as simply violating my rights to an unbiased investigation  
11 without false facts used to persuade me to take their offers. I  
12 requested to discuss this issue with Commissioner [Inaudible],  
13 Commissioner Daniel, and was offered three minutes to speak  
14 today this past Friday. But how can we dialogue if I'm only  
15 speaking for three minutes about an issue that is linked to  
16 three years? Please take this serious, this issue serious and  
17 package my case and send it back to HUD if there is no way that  
18 I can experience a fair investigation now going forward. If the  
19 general counsel has the potential against him for a complaint  
20 for his role in my case recently, this agency should not have  
21 the ability to close my case out to cover up a hidden truth. If  
22 you could hear the response from the AG as well as review the  
23 documentation, you would be concerned that your general counsel  
24 took part in the action and allowed his signature to be used

25

1 haphazardly. You were copied in my recent email. Please respond  
2 to my concerns.

3 UNIDENTIFIED: [Inaudible].

4 MS. HARRISON: Hello?

5 MR. TROBMAN: Thank you, Ms. Harrison. Thank  
6 you for your comments. Those are the comments we had this  
7 morning.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Thank you, Mr.  
9 Trobman. Good morning, Ms. Miller.

10 MS. MILLER: Good morning, sir.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. This brings us  
12 to the end of Agenda Items 3 through 7. We'll take a short  
13 recess.

14 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right, here we go.  
15 This is Agenda Item 8, AEL Advisory Committee Membership.

16 KERRY BALLAST: Good morning, Chair Daniel,  
17 Commissioner Demerson, Commissioner Treviño, and Mr. Serna. For  
18 the record, Kerry Ballast with Workforce Development Division.  
19 Senate Bill 307 of the 83<sup>rd</sup> Regular Session requires TWC to  
20 establish an Adult Education and Literacy Advisory Committee.  
21 The advisory committee must not be composed of more than nine  
22 members and must include at least one representative of the  
23 business community, and one of the local Workforce Development  
24 Board. We currently have both of those required roles filled but  
25 we do have vacancies we would like to fill at this time. We ask

1 that the following new members be considered by the commission.  
2 First, Dr. Ben Stafford, vice president of workforce continuing  
3 education at Lamar State College in Port Arthur. Second, Cindy  
4 Fisher of Austin, formerly with the Texas State Library and  
5 Archives Commission but recently hired by the State Broadband  
6 Office as senior program coordinator. And finally, Kristina  
7 Hartman of Huntsville who serves as superintendent with the  
8 Wyndham School District. Each member, if approved, will serve a  
9 two-year term ending in May 2025. This completes my remarks. I'm  
10 happy to answer any questions you have.

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or difficult  
12 questions?

13 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Chairman, before I  
14 make a motion, I'd like to say I heard Mahalia who was on stage  
15 at the conference doing a great job this morning.

16 KERRY BALLAST: Wonderful, thank you.

17 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: That's why we have  
18 Kerry here.

19 KERRY BALLAST: OK.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: No other comments.

21 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: I second the motion.

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I'm going to come  
23 back around and make that motion.

24 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Oh, sorry.

25

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, you made the motion.

2 [Inaudible].

3 KERRY BALLAST: I'll tell Mahalia she got

4 [inaudible].

5 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: The chairman gets us  
6 all back in order.

7 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: Thank you.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is the motion to approve  
9 the appointment of the individuals that Kerry named?

10 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Yes, the motion—I  
11 move that we approve the appointment of the following  
12 individuals to serve on the Adult Education and Literacy  
13 Advisory Committee with two-year terms expiring May 2025 as  
14 described in the discussion paper and presented today by staff.  
15 Again, Dr. Ben Stafford, Cindy Fisher, and Kristina Hartman.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: The motion has been  
17 seconded and we're unanimous. Thank you.

18 KERRY BALLAST: Thank you.

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: This is Agenda Item 9,  
20 Board Nominations.

21 CHERIE DUDLEY: Good morning, chairman,  
22 commissioners, and Mr. Serna. For the record, Cherie Dudley with  
23 Workforce Development. Today for your consideration we have  
24 Workforce Board nominations for Gulf Coast. Staff recommends

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1 approval on the presented nominees, and I'm here to answer  
2 questions you may have.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Questions or comments.

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.

5 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there a motion?

6 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I move that we  
7 approve the local Workforce Development Board member nominees  
8 presented today for Workforce Solutions Gulf Coast.

9 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: I second the motion.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and  
11 seconded. We're unanimous. Thank you.

12 CHERIE DUDLEY: Thank you.

13 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: This is Agenda Item 10,  
14 Statewide Initiatives. The first is expanded teacher  
15 externships.

16 SANDRA WILLIAMS: Good morning, chairman  
17 commissioners, Mr. Serna. For the record, Sandra Williams,  
18 Workforce Development Division. At the March 28, 2023, Workforce  
19 Commission meeting, staff were directed to compile information  
20 related to a possible expansion of the Externships for Teachers  
21 Program. The current design includes the following. Boards are  
22 the only eligible applicants. Externships are a minimum of three  
23 days in length. Teachers develop a curriculum based on the  
24 employer's industry to gain the experience needed to convey the  
25 new knowledge and skills to their students. Staff identified

1 three key components where access to the program may be  
2 increased, the number of teachers participating and the types of  
3 teachers participating with increased depth of experience. First  
4 is increasing the number of teachers who participate by  
5 expanding the pool of eligible applicants to include  
6 institutions of higher education and AEL providers. Ensure that  
7 the focus is on CTE and dual-credit programs in addition to the  
8 current teacher outreach, and then increasing the depth of  
9 experience by increasing the externship duration to five to 10  
10 days with exceptions for employers that are unable to offer  
11 longer onsite opportunities but would still like to participate.  
12 Allowing multi-employer externships where participants attend  
13 worksites on multiple related facilities and expanding real  
14 world experience for students by including either a field trip  
15 to the employer or a classroom visit from the employer,  
16 depending on the industry and employer capacity. Additionally,  
17 it will be required that both educators and the employer's staff  
18 have input and support for the teachers during the curriculum  
19 development. Staff seeks direction on incorporating the three  
20 expansion components in the FY24 Externships for Teachers  
21 Program. This item is presented for the TWC's three-member  
22 commissioners' consideration and approval prior to the beginning  
23 of the FY24 budget development process, and if approved will be  
24 incorporated into the FY24 grant application for the program.  
25 That concludes my comments. I'm happy to answer any questions.



1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

2 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Chairman, one  
3 question. In terms of the teachers, are they—is this for high  
4 school teachers only or does it go to middle school teachers as  
5 well?

6 SANDRA WILLIAMS: It is middle school  
7 teachers and high school teachers, and when we say high school  
8 teachers, it's also administrators.

9 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: OK, thank you.  
10 [Inaudible].

11 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: And so the expansion to  
12 the higher education, we would range from middle school all the  
13 way through community college, perhaps even university if we  
14 were to adopt this today?

15 SANDRA WILLIAMS: Absolutely.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: This just by way of  
17 commentary, I've been hearing from some employers, I've heard  
18 from some CTE, both CTE teachers and some vocational directors.  
19 There's a lot of power in this externship program that we're  
20 running, and I think we've been doing a good job. I don't think  
21 we've been getting the juice out of it that I think we could  
22 possibly get. One of the things is the ability for teachers to  
23 go out on the job site, particularly where CTEs are concerned,  
24 to see what's going on, and the teachers I've had the  
25 opportunity to visit with, this has been transformative in the

1 way they teach their class, and I think one of the issues we've  
2 been hearing from employers for some time is that students come  
3 out of school with a lot of knowledge but they can't really  
4 apply that knowledge in the workplace so there's kind of a  
5 retraining component off the get-go. I think this goes a long  
6 way to solve this. I appreciate staff taking this hard look at  
7 it, and I wholeheartedly appreciate the recommendations that you  
8 have. Is there a motion?

9 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Chair, I move  
10 that we approve the expansion of the Externships for Teachers  
11 Program as described in the discussion paper and presented today  
12 by staff.

13 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: I second the motion.

14 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and  
15 seconded, and we're unanimous. Thank you.

16 SANDRA WILLIAMS: Thank you.

17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We're still on Agenda Item  
18 10. This is Combined Youth Funding under Statewide Initiatives.

19 LESLIE KRUSE: Good morning, chairman,  
20 commissioners, Mr. Serna. For the record, Leslie Kruse,  
21 Workforce Division. At the March 28<sup>th</sup> commission meeting, staff  
22 were asked to bring forward a discussion paper combining youth  
23 program funding. Although youth programs are successful, recent  
24 reviews have shown that the demand for the programs varies from  
25 year to year due to changing priorities of youth activity

1 organizations and public popularity resulting in programs being  
2 underfunded while others receive excess funding. As noted in the  
3 discussion paper before you, staff present the concept to  
4 combine all current youth funding into two single line items,  
5 one for WIOA and one for TANF allowing staff flexibility to move  
6 funds within different programs to address the under or over  
7 budgeting. Staff will continue to monitor program expenditures  
8 to optimize each program's budget. New initiatives will be  
9 incorporated into one of the two line items. Staff seeks  
10 direction on combining all youth program funding into two single  
11 line items, one for WIOA and one for TANF. If approved, the  
12 revised youth budget approach will be incorporated into the  
13 fiscal year 2024 budget process and included in briefings. This  
14 concludes my presentation and I'm happy to answer any questions.

15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.

17 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: I have one comment,  
18 chairman. I would like to thank staff for meeting with my office  
19 to discuss this proposal. The staff has indicated that combining  
20 of the youth program funding into single line items based on the  
21 funding type would provide greater flexibility in moving funds  
22 and funding between programs should the initial allocations for  
23 the programs prove to be under or over budgeted. For this  
24 reason, I can support this initiative. However, I do request  
25 that staff provide notification to my office whenever funds are

1 recovered from a program or allotted to another program. Thank  
2 you.

3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Is there a motion?

4 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Chair, I move  
5 that we approve the combined youth program funding structure as  
6 described in the discussion paper and presented today by staff.

7 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: I second the motion.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and  
9 seconded, and we're unanimous. Thank you. It would seem we have  
10 a legislative report today.

11 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Britt.

12 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well yeah, his tie was  
13 tied, ready to spring into action.

14 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: He needs walk-up  
15 music.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We definitely have got to  
17 deal with this walk-up music situation.

18 MICHAEL BRITT: I have some suggestions for  
19 that.

20 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: We'll get together after  
21 the meeting.

22 MICHAEL BRITT: Good morning, Mr. Chairman,  
23 Commissioner Demerson, Commissioner Treviño, and Mr. Serna. For  
24 the record, Michael Britt, Governmental Relations. GR will be  
25 monitoring two federal hearings this week. Tomorrow at 10 a.m.,

1 the U. S. Senate Commerce, Science, and Transportation Committee  
2 is holding an executive session to consider pending legislation,  
3 and on Thursday at 10:15, the U. S. House Education and  
4 Workforce Subcommittee on Higher Education and Workforce  
5 Development is holding a hearing to consider ways to improve  
6 skills development. Regarding the state legislature, we have two  
7 hearings tomorrow where TWC will be providing resource witness  
8 testimony. Tomorrow at 8:30 a.m., the Senate Committee on  
9 Natural Resources and Economic Development will hear House Bill  
10 1615 by Representative Button, and that's relating to strategies  
11 to increase the availability of child care and pre-kindergarten  
12 programs, and Reagan Miller will be our resource witness on  
13 behalf of the TWC. Also, tomorrow at 9 a.m., the House Committee  
14 on International Relations and Economic Development will be  
15 considering two pieces of legislation. Senate Bill 2315 by  
16 Senator Hughes, and that's relating to the creation of a  
17 taskforce to develop a plan for the consolidation of the  
18 functions of workforce development administered by TWC, and  
19 social service programs administered by the Health and Human  
20 Services Commission, and they will also be considering the  
21 corresponding Senate concurrent resolution, and Courtney Arbour  
22 will be the resource witness on that bill. Just in closing, we  
23 have 20 days left in the 88<sup>th</sup> Texas Legislature, Regular Session.  
24 We do have several major legislative deadlines this week. Most  
25 notably, Thursday is the last day for the Texas House to pass

1 House bills and House joint resolutions on second reading, and  
2 Friday is the last day for the House to pass House bills and  
3 joint resolutions on third reading. This concludes my remarks.  
4 I'm happy to answer any questions.

5 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?

6 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.

7 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: None here.

8 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you very much.

9 MICHAEL BRITT: Thank you.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: An executive director's  
11 report. Mr. Serna, I received the most curious communication  
12 from the governor. I wanted to read this. The State of Texas,  
13 the governor, to all whom these presents shall come, greetings.  
14 Know ye that this official recognition is presented to Maria  
15 Gabriela Fuentes of the Texas Workforce Commission. The governor  
16 says congratulations on your well-deserved retirement after more  
17 than 28 years of service to the people of Texas. She couldn't  
18 have even had a driver's license when she started. Public  
19 service is an honor and deeply rooted in the public trust. State  
20 employees earn this trust by demonstrating dependability,  
21 initiative, and wise stewardship of public resources. Their  
22 endless dedication proves that this state's greatest asset lies  
23 within the people who call it home. At this time, I commend you  
24 for your contributions and unwavering commitment to the Lone  
25 Star State highlighted by your years of dedicated service as

1 deputy chief of staff and policy director at the Texas Workforce  
2 Commission as well as your many years with the Appointments  
3 Division in the Office of the Governor. First Lady, Cecilia  
4 Abbott, joins me in sending best wishes for an enjoyable and  
5 fulfilling retirement. In testimony whereof I have signed my  
6 name across the seal of the state of Texas to be affixed at the  
7 city of Austin on this 20<sup>th</sup> day of April, 2023. We'll give this  
8 to Gaby, I think.

9 MR. SERNA: Yes, sir.

10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: But before we do, I'm also  
11 pleased to note that the state of Texas, the House of  
12 Representatives has flown a flag in Gaby's honor over the  
13 sovereign state of Texas Capitol on April 23<sup>rd</sup> but we can't give  
14 her the flag yet because we decided to fly it over the  
15 commission today so it's on the flagpole outside the commission  
16 today, on May 9<sup>th</sup>, also in celebration of Gaby's years of  
17 service, and I have certificates indicating the same so as soon  
18 as this meeting concludes, if we can get Gaby to come forward,  
19 I'll give here these things and everybody can give her a nice  
20 round of applause. But before we do that, is there any other  
21 order of business to come before the commission?

22 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I guess I'll run  
23 into Gaby at HEB a little bit more often now so we'll see each  
24 other there. Congratulations, Gaby, on that amazing achievement.  
25 I've known Gaby since the appointment days and before, and so

1 appreciate all the work you've done. Congratulations big time on  
2 that. Mr. Chair, two points here. This week is Economic  
3 Development Week and so I want to encourage all the workforce  
4 development professionals to take economic developers out to  
5 lunch or drop by and say hi to those guys. And then secondly, I  
6 wanted to introduce our summer interns. It's getting ready to  
7 start and so wanted to point out Alexandra Reagan. If you'd  
8 stand Alexandra. She's going to school. Where are you going to  
9 school? Ohio State University but we're going to get her back  
10 here to Texas. She has an interest in history and policy and  
11 things on that side so I'm delighted to have Alexandra on the  
12 team. She says she's real quick on her feet, and I said I won't  
13 stand you up to the chairman or whatever who is real quick on  
14 his feet but love for you guys to kind of get into a  
15 conversation at some point.

16 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I'm sure we will over this  
17 Ohio State situation.

18 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Right.

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I'm looking forward to it.

20 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: She's already  
21 talking and not sitting down.

22 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: She's a quick study,  
23 commissioner.

24 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Oh, yeah.

25



1 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: I just wanted to  
2 congratulate Gaby as well. It's been a short time since I've  
3 known her but she's been very helpful to my wife and I since  
4 we've been here in Austin so congratulations and good luck.  
5 Thank you.

6 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I have worked with Gaby  
7 for more years than either one of us would really reasonably  
8 admit to. She is an absolute delight. I wish her very well. When  
9 you sort of mathematically reach this point on the retirement  
10 scale, you have to start making decisions for yourself and your  
11 family. I'm happy for her. I hate for it to not be able to see  
12 her every day and to work with her but this is a wonderful thing  
13 and it's a wonderful opportunity for her and I'm glad she's  
14 taking it. I'm glad she earned that right. With that, I'd  
15 entertain a motion to adjourn the meeting.

16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: So, moved.

17 COMMISSIONER TREVIÑO: I second the motion  
18 to adjourn.

19 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and  
20 seconded to adjourn and we're adjourned. Thank you.

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