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TASK FORCE MEETING – SENATE BILL 1092

MAY 11, 2022

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>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Hello, everyone. Welcome to our May meeting for the ACDHH task force on language acquisition. We have a wonderful agenda planned for the day, and I'd like to remind everyone that we do have the PowerPoint separate from today's meeting. If you'd like to refer to the PowerPoint, I suggest you open it on a separate screen on your own so that you can keep track of where we are as we go along.

For example, I have an iPad here with me, so I'm using that to refer to my PowerPoint. And the PowerPoint is available on the website, and I can also link to it in the chat. If you'll give me a moment to share that link. I'll send that in the chat right now. There it is. Hopefully that will be a little bit easier for you to access the PowerPoint on your end.

We do have interpreters with us here today. If you'd like to have access to captioning, you'll want to make sure you click on that box, whichever is your preferred accessibility. Today is May 11th, and one more full task meeting remaining after this, and we'll see where we are now and where we need to go in the future.

I'm now on slide 2. And we'd like to review the purpose of this task force. Our goal is to gather information and data and work with a diverse set of community members to discuss language acquisition and determine how we can implement the law SB 1092, which has the goal of language access and language acquisition for all Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind children in the state of Arizona.

And that's from birth to 21. Slide 3 is the plan for today. We would like to track our progress, see where we are now, and we also want to have a wonderful panel planned for today as well.

And the second half of the meeting will be some updates from our subcommittees, assessment review, data, and demographics, and then systemic connections. We have three wonderful hard working subcommittees here on our task force.

After that, we'll have a few minutes remaining to talk about next steps, and to provide a template for our report so that we can make sure that we are prepared for our final submissions before our public input forum in June.

We are now on slide 4. And as noticed, we do have a number of subcommittee -- have had a number of subcommittee meetings and task force meetings, and on June 8th will be our final task force meeting, which means we will prepare a draft to submit at that time. And that's where we'll want to have everybody complete their respective templates, so that we can pile the information -- compile the information for our final report to share with the public on June 18th. Which is the public forum date. That's a Saturday morning online.

And that will be an opportunity for the committee to share our gatherings with the general public, and these meetings are open to the public, but we would like to have everyone have access to the draft and then provide input for consideration before we submit that. So we are looking forward to that public forum meeting as well.

I wanted to emphasize that the recommendations are not intended to solve every challenge and issue that we've recognized. We know that there are some deficits in the Deaf and Hard of Hearing education system in Arizona, but our job is to identify some gaps and some areas for potential growth and to develop these partnerships, so that we can grow together and increase family awareness as well as other aspects of language acquisition.

That's really the task of this job. So after the public forum on June 15th, we will talk about the feedback that was provided, and then come together as subcommittees. The final information that will be shared with you all to submit on June 30th.

As you can see, our timeline is approaching the end. I wanted to clarify prior, I said June 18th, and then I said June 15th. But thank you, Beca, for correcting me. June 18th is the Saturday morning.

Now, slide 5.

The graphic shown on slide 5 reflects the idea of facilitating today's meeting. We'd like to integrate a set of design policy, which is important. We also like to set up the context so that we know why we're here, where we're going, and what we need to discuss. What each of us are asked with. And then create a hospitable space so that we can get to know each other and we can make sure that we have the subcommittees in our smaller groups. And we are always looking for the questions that remain and the information that we need to consider. So I'm looking forward to more of that kind of discussion.

I encourage participation and contribution. Some can contribute via email. Some can contribute via their subcommittee or at the greater task force meetings. So everyone can contribute in a number of ways throughout.

We would like to make sure that we have diverse range of perspectives, which is part of the reason for our panelists today. We like to see a little bit more about their journey and what they're willing to share with us based on their experience.

We would like to make sure that we really attend to each other and be welcoming of new ideas and perspective to see what works and if somebody has a different perspective, we'd like to keep that concept of sharing open.

And finally, we'd like to continue this collective findings approach. There have been some really exciting things that we have learned, and we've been able to share that with each other. I'd like to encourage you to continue to do that as you learn from other states or other programs that may have been overlooked throughout this process, so that we can identify various opportunities that maybe are working well already, and areas that need to be improved upon.

So you can be thinking about your respective fields and then doing your own research in a number of different areas.

And then, all of that contributes to the context and it shapes the context of language acquisition for Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind individuals in Arizona so that you can see what their individual journeys might look like and how they might differ in the beginning years and as years go on.

So that's just something that we'd like to continue to think about. The next slide. Slide six. Hopefully, everyone has been able to access that.

I saw that someone couldn't access, so I wanted to check on that quickly. But I'd like to invite our panelists, Colin Denny, Latrina Harris Lewis to come on screen. Hello, Colin.

>> COLIN DENNY: Hello.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Let me just check my messages here. Okay, and Latrina. Hi, Latrina. Good morning.

I think we're waiting for one more person. Great. Hello. I'm glad Kelly's here as well. It's nice to have all three of you. Thank you for joining us, for sharing your experience and your perspectives.

This task force has a number of different state agencies, community representatives, organization representatives, et cetera. So I wanted you all to share a little bit about your perspectives on your journey as a Deaf person with different identities, racial and ethnic identities, maybe parent perspective. What other perspective you have to offer, so we wanted to bring you all here to share your truth with us.

So I will open with some questions, and the first one being, can you share a little bit about yourself and how you got involved in the journey of language acquisition for Deaf and Hard of Hearing children and what your role has been in that process. Kel

>> This is Latrina. I can start. Hello, my name is Latrina and this is my name sign. I am a Deaf person, I was born Deaf. Interesting question about my journey, because I look back at a Deaf child, actually, I was born in Dallas, Texas. There's a large Deaf community there. They had a Deaf ed program in place, they had early intervention, at time they called it family services.

And that was -- I was born in the '70s, so, you know, they had those in place. They had some of them in place. They had a preschool program in place. At the time, the popular method was total communication, which meant signing and speaking, using your voice and anything that would provide access.

If that child needed spoken language, or hearing aids, or whatever, and CIs were just kind of emerging at the time, cochlear implants were emerging at the time. So the discussion was just starting, and they knew that we were looking to that in the '80s and the '90s.

But my family was -- I found out that I was Deaf at about 1, 1 1/2, so I went into a preschool program. And, you know, we were talking about how to communicate. Sign language or spoken language. Or whether or not we should do both. And my parents said both, because they wanted to know how they were going to pick up the language, how I was going to pick up language. How I was going to communicate with the family.

So we did both. And I took on that system, and I would say the earlier the better, right? I was 1 1/2. That's really when I started learning. I had access to a visual language at that age. I couldn't hear the language, so I did get hearing aids, so I was given hearing aids.

And interesting, I was interested in sound and my parents emphasized that I as a youngster was interested in sound, right? And I was -- but I was focused on the sign language. They gave me the hearing aids, and I was kind of following along, sort of with things. The yes and no.

But my primary thing was not auditory, taking information in an auditory way. It was more visual access.

So I had access to both. I would pick up environmental noise. I would listen to the auditory input. But music really was never a big interest for me. Later, I became interested in speech and music.

But primarily, at first, it was the visual mode. And PSE was very popular at the time, pigeon-signed English. So I really got into that. But now as a teacher, my goal is to make sure students have early access. If they don't know sign language, my goal is to give them the language to expose them to the language.

So that's kind of a quick synopsis of my journey.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Great, thank you. And now you teach what age?

>> LATRINA LEWIS: 8 and 9-year-olds. Yeah. And so a lot of them have missed things in the early years. And so I'm doing a lot of catch-up work, trying to get them to acquire language that should have already been acquired, so we're doing a lot of catch-up work. I'm exposing them to things, you know, sign language, pictures, anything I can, and technology is so awesome now, right?

I can get a picture on the fly. I can show that. I can bring in a prop. I can show them what things look like. We can play around with things to help expose them to that language. And it helps with their language acquisition.

And from there, we transition to the bye-bye approach.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Great. Thank you for sharing that. Colin or Kellie, would either of you like to go next?

>> COLIN DENNY: Hello. I'll be second. My name is Colin. Colin Denny. This is my sign

name. I was not raised Deaf, I wasn't born Deaf. I grew up and was initially born hearing, and was diagnosed later with a hearing loss. The Deaf program enacted at the time wasn't really present for me, and there wasn't a lot of knowledge or access for me and my family growing up.

Both of my parents were teachers, so my parents did see a lot of Deaf people in their lives prior to interacting with me, and I was not their first person. So I do know that being exposed to language was something that was imperative and my parents did help me out with that.

My parents were eager to find resources for me as teachers, and they knew that that was important. My journey with language acquisition started when I was, you know -- you know, I was born hearing, and as far as that goes, English was my first language.

So I started acquiring English, and when I was in the community, I -- in the Navajo Nation. And so that was my first language. My second language was English. That I acquired later on. And so I was bilingual with Navajo and English languages. As a hearing person.

So that's -- you know, the initial part of my acquisition. And when I was 13, I eventually learned and was diagnosed with my hearing loss. And I started learning ASL.

So that is really kind of the picture of my timeline and how I became more acquired to ASL. And my hearing loss at the age of 13 kind of forced me to start acquiring that third language.

When I started with my hearing loss at the age of 13, it required me to be more of a visual learner. And I've noticed, like other Deaf children, that gestures in ASL and being a visual learner, that kind of starts usually with learning signs for each word and acquiring that language over time.

So my first languages were Navajo English, and later on in life, I learned sign language. Now I work as an ASL tutor in New Mexico. And there's four regions that I typically work with, and I work with primarily students who are learning ASL, and I show a lot of visuals and graphics to help them learn as well as other images.

Typically, it's a word with a visual and a sign, and it helps those children acquire that language. Not every child learns the same. And typically, every student learns differently. It's not one size fits all approach. So I try to be flexible when tutoring them.

So I enjoy teaching within the community in the northwest, in New Mexico. Excuse me. Families typically prefer to also be immersed in that culture, and that can be something that should be learned at home, and hopefully that can be something we can help motivate and integrate more families within that and get more families involved with that unity and outreach.

So, typically, I'm trying to -- as tutoring these children, I'm trying to incorporate the families to get more involved as well.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Great, thank you. I know that you really can't separate language and culture, and relationships are a big part of that as well as family backgrounds, cultural

backgrounds, et cetera.

And I even have to consider what I bring as a professional and what biases I may have from my upbringing, and whether or not that's a shared bias with those that I'm teaching.

Colin, could you tell me what part of Arizona you were born and raised?

>> COLIN DENNY: I was born in the River Reservation. I was born on the reservation known as the rez. That's where I was raised as well. In a very small city within Arizona. There's not a whole lot of ASL resources out there and there's no programs typically for Deaf children.

So my parents later on had to research a Deaf school and they sent me to AZDB, and that's where I was exposed to the culture and lifestyle as being a Deaf person. And that helped me be exposed to the environment as well.

I became more motivated and then eventually, I came back and wanted to spread that awareness, and really set a foundation for other Deaf children. So typically, the type of students -- you know, when they have the same story as me, they are immersed within that culture, they became motivated like myself as well.

I became very motivated when I was 12.5, and I just want to be able to provide that same motivation and access and teach Deaf children or children with hearing loss how to acquire that language. And that's why I tutor ASL, and I provide language access to have a more equitable lifestyle for those Deaf children.

And oftentimes, these children, especially those born on the reservation, don't only know ASL, or when they don't know ASL, English is not their only language as well.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: That's why it's so wonderful to have community resources available to families, because when they identify deafness, then they can better support their children. It is a difficult journey, particularly for those that are growing up on the reservation to then learn an entirely new language and experience the experiences that you had.

Now, I just wanted to make sure that the interpreters caught the correct name for the reservation that you were raised on. Did you say you were in a town -- what was the name of the reservation or the town?

>> COLIN DENNY: Pinon.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Okay, thank you very much.

>> COLIN DENNY: That's where I was raised. I work with several students from the districts from various reservations. And we try to gather and collect together and discuss different situations. But there hasn't been a lot of outreach for that yet. There hasn't been a program enacted for specifically reservation children.

So I'd like to partner and bridge that gap as well. Typically, that's in the northern part of Arizona, but there are several students in the southern part as well. Yeah, there are no Deaf organizations set up, so I'd like to generationally help children and their posterity in the future to help set that up.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Great. Thank you for your assistance in that area. That's something that the task force should keep in mind as we continue to build those partnerships and resources. So I really appreciate that last part about the lack of Deaf centers and organizations in that area.

Last but not least, Kellie, if you could share a little bit about yourself. I was lucky to find you on the Facebook group, and your experience of your beautiful child was wonderful to learn about. So I'm looking forward to what you have to share today related to your journey about discovering that you have a Deaf child and the processes that began at that point.

>> KELLIE MENDOZA: Yeah, thank you. I'm just curious, before I start, am I expected to sign and speak or -- which is easier for the interpreters?

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: You can choose your language mode. Whichever you prefer.

>> KELLIE MENDOZA: Okay. I'm going to try to sign and speak.

So my name is Kellie, and I don't have a sign name yet. It's in progress. I identify as Hard of Hearing and hearing. It's kind of a complex, like, situation. So I have progressive hearing loss, and kind of like caught between two worlds.

I also have a profoundly Deaf aunt, and it wasn't until about four years after meeting my aunt that we had my daughter, and at 15 months old, I had expressed some concerns about my daughter's speech and walking wasn't happening yet, and she couldn't stand independently yet, and the doctors had diagnosed her with autism, like, almost instantly.

And that was going on for a while, until age 2. They decided to test her hearing. And they said oh, she's not autistic, she's Deaf. And so that was like a big surprise. We were just shocked.

The experiences have been unique and challenging because I feel like our first connection was to doctors and hearing technology and special ed, and not Deaf community or Deaf services. So, I was forced to go and seek those out myself, and that was only because of my exposure with my aunt that I met as an adult.

So, it's been interesting, it's been difficult.

I struggle with connecting the hearing parent with Deaf kids. I struggle with connecting to Deaf parents. And it's just been -- it's just been extremely isolating and lonely. Like, my primary focus is wanting to change, I guess, the narrative of, like, what Deaf kids deserve and their right to just exist as a Deaf child, and... yep.

I don't know what else to share about myself personally, because my focus is, like, really on my daughter.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Yes, absolutely. I know that I have already learned more about you just in the last minute or two, so I appreciate you sharing that perspective. Could you tell us a little bit more about Ruby, and Ruby's age, and the type of schooling Ruby is getting, maybe a little bit about their experience with language acquisition and your experience observing that as a parent.

>> KELLIE MENDOZA: So, Ruby, her name sign is Ruby. And that was given to her by a Deaf child, and she's 3 years old. So you know already that we found out that she was Deaf at 2. She did receive a cochlear implant at 2.5, which sometimes I'm like regretting. But I really wanted to try everything for her and not limit anything. Not that I believe that signing is limiting, but.

She -- like, because her doctors didn't notice the hearing loss before 2, she was language deprived for two years. And it's always regretful because I know sign and I taught my other children to sign, but for some reason that I don't understand, when Ruby was born, my life was a little bit hectic. So I just wasn't putting in, like, the effort to teach my children sign anymore. That stopped.

And so, it's always interesting to me that I have this Deaf child, and now I'm not signing. So, currently, Ruby is not in any school program because we're struggling to find one that's accessible. I am preferable to Phoenix Day School For the Deaf, but the commute is too far, and we share one vehicle, my husband and I, that we use for work.

So I'm trying to, like, find a job in like a local preschool that's, you know, near us, where I can work and provide that language accessibility to all the children that go to that school, and maybe just find a path where Ruby can grow up around children who are already learning to sign.

So that's been difficult. Sorry, like, did I miss a question in there?

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: No, no, that was a terrific response. And I recognize that geography has consistently been a challenge. I know that Colin mentioned having to go up to the far parts of the state, or living in the far parts of the state, so which city are you living in currently that is far from Phoenix Day School For the Deaf?

I see, okay, you're in Florence.

>> KELLIE MENDOZA: Yeah. So it's one hour from Phoenix day school for the Deaf, and one hour from Tucson.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Yeah. Yeah, that's a challenge. Okay, I get it. Let me see what my next question was.

I have a few more questions, and we'll make sure that the task force has been listening with an open heart and open mind, and hopefully we'll have some more questions from them at the end as well.

All right. I'm going to combine questions 2 and 3. The first part is, what barriers have you faced with language acquisition work, and what rewards have you experienced in that role or with that program related to language acquisition. Have you identified any wonderful resources or components that were helpful in your journey and process to language acquisition.

So, if you could identify some of the challenges or barriers as well as some of the rewards and resources.

>> COLIN DENNY: I can go first. This is Colin. You know, one of the barriers that I have faced, or that I often faced, as Kellie has mentioned, is distance, geographical isolation. A lot of families are very far away, which means, you know, if we're in the northern part of Arizona, then you have to drive maybe seven hours, and if you're in Phoenix -- if you go to Phoenix, maybe it's four, four and a half hours, depending on the traffic.

From where I am, it's about seven hours, though. So there's a long drive. If you drive and then you have to drop children off, people are concerned whether or not their children are going to be safe there, right? If there are dorms, it's one thing. The dorms are even further away. PDSD doesn't have any dorms.

So a lot of families don't want to let their children go away that far, and that can be a barrier. They want to maintain that connection.

In terms of rewards, I would say honestly, you know, my job currently as an ASL tutor is that I see that we have an opportunity to model for them. We can do a lot. As an indigenous Deaf person, I can go into that community and teach them these things. Now, when I leave, that means that they lose me. I wish there were more people -- I wish we could clone me. I wish there were more people like me who could go in and educate them and teach them ASL and be connected to the community in that way, to really give of themselves that same experience.

But we try to help in whatever way we can. We try to provide access for the children. And the parents are learning -- often, the parents are trying to learn, the kids are going to school, they go to the school for the Deaf and they learn, but where is the place for the parents? The parents are often sort of left out, and there's no connection for the parents. That's a gap sometimes. That's missing.

So, that's my response for barriers and rewards. I see improvement when the kids go to the schools for the Deaf, but when they -- you know, if you have someone that goes into the home, that teaches them, that they see someone around, that's helpful. But there's often a gap. And people are often not on the same page. That piece is missing, too.

So I think it's important to have both connection with the parents and the children so that the parents can learn more advanced things. And then we have to start basic as the children are starting basic. But so that they have an understanding.

But then the parents need to understand what the child is trying to tell them. What they're trying to explain to them. What they're talking about. So we need their own opportunities to look like that.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Yeah, it sounds like we need to build more protections for the

schools and the homes together, not isolate the two of them. But if we have somebody in the community, I can see that that can be a real benefit of reward. So thank you for sharing that.

And if anybody else would like to share barriers or rewards that you experienced in your journey of language acquisition, either for yourself as somebody involved, or for your child?

>> LATRINA LEWIS: I can go. This is Latrina. Kind of coming back to this, in terms of barriers, I wouldn't say it was really a barrier, but it wasn't available. A lot of culture, Black signing, in terms of location and providing ASL, at that time, things were very far. My parents were at a disadvantage because they'd have to look at the schedule, they'd have to get us there. It was very difficult. Things are better now because of technology. Certainly that's much better.

Zoom, people can join virtually. And we have many more BIPOC, people of color, Deaf people of color in the community. So people are in touch more. You can go online. You can go in person. There's more training. Things are more accessible, right? And it's just more visual.

Still not enough, but there is more. There are more people of color involved. We're also seeing additional disabilities involved as well now.

So it's not just coming from an able-bodied person. We need to include diverse people with disabilities, and specifically for that, ask what their family needs. What they want. What kind of resources do they need, because sometimes we assume, and then we give them things, but we never really asked families what they need, or if they need something else.

So I think we need to back up and before we offer anything, we need to ask them, what do they need, what is their vision for what their family needs, what were they like. Parents with -- you know, and they've got different things that they need, and there may be grandparents involved in the picture, too. We're seeing more grandparents now raising children.

So we need to ask the grandparents what they need. So it's really dependent on who the child lives with. Sometimes large families. Sometimes it's single parent families. So we can't make assumptions that there are barriers -- that they're experiencing specific barriers. We need to first meet them where they're at and ask them, in that intake, ask them what they need.

In terms of language acquisition. And then try to offer that. So I think that's important. More culture, more diversity, and more questions, asking them what they need.

As a teacher now, as a professional, that's one thing. In my time with a child, I worked with an interpreter and more and more mainstream programs are available now, but if you have an interpreter, make sure the interpreters are qualified and they know how to work with young children. Some interpreters just put out the message and they don't really connect.

But that child is really taking that in. This is a visual language, right? If the child doesn't understand, then you have to give the child that extra input. I'm looking at the interpreter for access to communication and learning, and often that piece is missing.

When I think about myself as a child, there was one interpreter who would spell the word. Had to spell the word "exercise." Exercise, exercise. And asked what exercise looks like. I think that that's important, putting that out there.

But a lot of times, they don't understand what exercise is. It wasn't exercise like physical exercise. It was exercise like a practice or a training. So interpreters have to have access, have to know the context, and know the multiple meanings of the words and give the correct information to children. So I'd say more accessibility, more early intervention, meeting the families where they are, and we're improving that, little by little, but we always need to improve more.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Great, thank you. I really appreciated your point about the resources and being mindful of multiculturalism and the needs of the family first, and not overlooking those needs, particularly if you have a student that's Deaf plus or additional perspectives as well.

You also had a good point about quality of interpreters is an important component of language acquisition. We often think of teachers and students and schools and families, but we do need to incorporate that perspective related to qualified interpreters as well. So thank you very much.

Kellie, is there any other considerations you'd like to add about barriers and rewards?

>> KELLIE MENDOZA: So, I've already mentioned that, you know, the very first barrier that we experienced was the language deprivation until age 2, and that was because of just not having that recognition of her hearing level.

The second barrier would be, you know, access to schools. I really, really want to send Ruby to the Phoenix Day School For the Deaf, but I just can't justify creating that extra risk of that far drive, especially when it's during that rush hour twice a day on the interstate. It's really worrisome for me. So I guess that's my main barrier focus.

My personal experience with, like, reward has just been my own connection with the Deaf community and seeking out, like, a Deaf mentor. Mentor. Sorry. And the Deaf mentor was amazing. I wish we could have, you know, had that experience in-person, but because of COVID, unfortunately, that was not like in our favor.

I'm just -- I don't feel like I have a lot to offer as far as input. Yeah.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: No, that's totally fine. Your daughter is still so young, so her journey has only just begun. But it's wonderful to think about the rewards that will be coming ahead.

So now you seem to have a network and community support, which is terrific. Colin, you wanted to add?

>> COLIN DENNY: Yeah, I'd like to add one more thing, talking about what we need and what is important. One important part -- well, just thinking how to say that. I guess it's a need. But often we

don't acknowledge what people need. You know, sometimes we just go forward with what we're doing.

We have to think about things. You know, especially in the indigenous communities. A lot of the times, they don't have Internet in their home. Schools have it, and that's great. They have online access that they can provide there. But that's a problem, and it's a conflict. So they have it at school, but they don't have it at home. So that can be a barrier, because it's missing. Not having access to the Internet, while other people do have access to the Internet.

And that's another reason, right, is when you think about -- you know, you send them videos, we make videos, and we say, you have to, you know, watch this video, I'm going to send this video to you, but they don't have access to the Internet. They can't look at it.

So we have -- I mean, there's always an opportunity to learn every day in how we approach them, and you're right. You know, Kellie, your daughter is young. You're just starting to learn. You're off to a great start, really.

>> KELLIE MENDOZA: Thank you. I wanted to share, like, I did do my own personal like research project where I was calling around to like all the different preschool programs in the area, and even like going as far as like Gilbert, and I was asking if any of the programs offer an ASL inclusive curriculum, and what I found was that some of them said, oh, yeah, we teach babies sign. I was like, okay. No.

I mean, like, a language inclusive. So English alongside of signing. Like, do you have that? And I did find many programs that offered a Spanish and English curriculum for preschool. And none that offered the same thing for signing for Deaf children.

So it was interesting to me, I went online and I looked up, you know, how many preschools do we have in Arizona? And there was over 2,000 state license preschools.

And out of that 2,000, I -- like my daughter has access to only two that are language inclusive. And that's just my daughter. Like, Colin mentioned that there's other communities who have no access, like, at all. So, it's just deeply, like, troubling for me to see that we have a community of more than 1 million Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the state of Arizona, and only two school options.

Like for the entire state. That being the biggest barrier, like, if my daughter wants to go to school, she needs an interpreter. She needs to work harder than everyone else in her class, and even still, when she goes to the playground or the cafeteria, she's still isolated, she's still the only one that can't connect or socialize.

I don't understand that. It's very frustrating for me as a parent to see -- you know, we go to, like, the parks and kids will approach her, and they want to play, and they don't understand, you know, why she's not talking back to them. I just want to see more Deaf awareness in every community.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: That's a really good point you raise, because often, we only think of maybe one or two resources as being available in the state, and that doesn't always work for people that are living in farther or more rural areas in the state. So we definitely have to look into local collaborations and education and awareness as well as cultural sensitivity to make sure that everyone is prepared from various backgrounds to be able to participate in an inclusive educational environment.

So, you know, of course that means language, but not only American Sign Language. So there's definitely other perspectives there.

I did want to ask two more questions briefly. When we consider the diverse population in the state of Arizona, and based on your experience, what are some things that the task force should consider related to language acquisition in the community?

And I know Latrina talked about a number of cultural resources and people of color, so perhaps you could expand a little bit more on what that would look like.

[No audio]

>> LATRINA LEWIS: When you think about all the families that are out there and the different families that we have when we go to meet them, you know, we talk to them about -- we gather this information, then we meet with an early childhood expert, right?

And then we're looking at things, and at the same time, we can ask if they know anyone, and I can ask around and look for resources. If there are things that are missing, you know, we can assume that -- we can't necessarily assume that one thing is going to be correct. But we can ask, maybe also from outside of Arizona, we don't necessarily have to focus in Arizona.

I mean, Arizona really doesn't have a lot. There's not a huge Black community here in Arizona. It's pretty small. It's not very large. We're seeing Black Deaf children moving in, moving from other places, either military, or people are moving for jobs.

And so we have to think about their community. Where is their community and where are we going to get Black adults, for example, to help them.

So we have to really build a network. We have to find mentors and tutors and other people that they can relate to, and they can say, hey, you know, this is similar, we're both Black, we're the same color, or we're talking about food, they can share food, if it's Jamaican food, or they can learn how to cook.

So they can look up to someone and say, all right, you're cooking Jamaica food. What is that? Jerk chicken. What spices are you putting in there? That's different than American food, right?

So cooking can be a great thing to use. For me, I'm from Texas. I do love my barbecue. I have to tell you, I love my barbecue. When I meet someone from the south, we can talk about that. We can talk about cooking. We can talk about Mac and cheese or corn or whatever it is, you know?

And I think, you know, if you think about using Black sign language and what that looks like, it's a little bit different, and it also depends on the geographic location they're from.

But be curious. Expose thing to things. I've made a separate video for BIPOC with BSL. To show what that looks like. I can bring that in to families and show them. It's a short 40-minute video. But BSL, you can really go to town with that. But I choose some fine facts from it that the students might enjoy learning.

So there's a lot that we can do really to engage them. And then also, just generally, you're talking about DEI. Diversity, equity, and inclusion, right? The first thing, A, is accessibility. DEIA is what it should be, because it needs to be accessible for anybody, whether we have CART there, some people prefer sign language, some people prefer ASL, some people prefer CDI in there, so they have a Deaf interpreter.

You know, some people prefer, if it's a defer blind individual, they want to have tactile sign language or pro-tactile sign language. Whatever it is, we have to be mindful of these things. We have to ask each individual what they prefer and what they need.

And then, thinking about Kellie -- oh, you want me to back up. Black American Sign Language. BASL. Sorry. And we can talk more about that later, if you want.

But, again, just to back up, Kellie, you're saying about living so far. We do wish that every area of the state had a school, had teachers there. Sometimes I wish I could split myself in half, or into parts, so I could go and teach in each of these locations. I would love to do that.

But, you know, Arizona is a big state. I'm in the classroom teaching, but sometimes I wish I could get out there. And I wish all the children could move here, because we have dorms here in Tucson. The parents can come any way. It's really nice in that way. But we do have available resources.

One thing to consider is should we have dorms in other areas of the state? Thinking about having access in those different areas. It's something to consider.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Thank you for that. I want to emphasize you talked about inviting more professionals who are also BIPOC individuals who can share their experience and identity with children in that same population.

Anything else you'd like to add? Colin.

>> COLIN DENNY: Yeah, this is a big topic. I've been thinking about this. Like Deaf mentors, Deaf teachers, ASL teachers. Any specialist out there working -- you know, Deaf people doing the work instead of hearing people doing the work. Hearing people are learning their student's language. In that question about the parents refusing to send their kids to the school for the Deaf, or refusing to learn.

And why don't they take classes there in that school district? Why don't they set up classes there in that school district to learn there. And provide more of that. Instead of having to go to the school for the Deaf.

Why don't they provide it in their home area? I think that's an important part of language acquisition for them, is exposure and learning, interacting with them on the daily. So that if they're there, then they can see it. But if it's not there, there's that disconnect. They need to have more connection with their children. We need to establish more ASL classes.

Virtual doesn't always work, because it just doesn't always work. We need to have something there in person. We need to have a team that can come up with some creative ideas to help them. I think that's a key factor.

One thing I can think of is that when I think about Maslow's hierarchy, the needs, it's important to talk -- to look at the needs. If they don't have food, we need to take care of those basic needs first. Those are the things they're thinking about. They're screaming for help. How do we help them? I mean, it's fine. Maybe that will increase their motivation, if we're there for them, and show them that we care for them and that we're providing what they need instead of leaving them on their own and feeling like they've been neglected or abandoned.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Yeah, we definitely need to make sure that families have their basic needs met first before they can move on to the additional needs in Maslow's hierarchy. But we do want to make sure that everybody is safe and has food and shelter at the very least, and sometimes we forget about that. We think about pushing them into programs to learn various things when they don't have their basic needs met.

So I do -- I see those as a challenge, and see that we'd need to consider how to offer additional supports in that area. Sometimes it's a mental health related issue, or a financial crisis that a family is experiencing, or additional challenges that those families are faced with. So that's true. Thank you for mentioning that.

And then Kellie, was there anything that you wanted to add on that?

>> KELLIE MENDOZA: Yeah, so, again, just to repeat what I've already said. My focus as far as diversity would be cost. Cost for getting to the schools, cost for going to the programs and the services that are offered. You know, I guess my, like -- my main focus is cost to the families.

I do have some questions that I don't quite understand. There seems to be this huge gap between the medical professionals and, like, all of us.

When a child is first diagnosed with, you know, hearing loss, they're first sent to doctors and technology. And I don't understand why -- for example, if I hadn't have gone and sought out those services myself, the first place I would have been directed to is special ed. My daughter's not special ed. She's just not. Sorry, she's Deaf. And she needs Deaf community and Deaf support.

So, another issue being that -- I'm a big believer that we need to be supporting laws that mandate hearing tests birth to 3, so that we can immediately connect those kids to the Deaf community and Deaf support services.

I personally believe that we need to, as a State, we need to offer incentives to teachers who are going to college to become teachers to learn sign and offer a curriculum in their classrooms when they're teaching English, alongside signing, so that every school has at least one classroom that is language inclusive.

For example, I don't understand why an English teacher can't say, okay, stop. Voices off. The next 15 minutes of class are signing only. I don't understand that. We spend, what, 12 or 13 years of school raising children to learn English. 13 years. And you can't give us K-6 to also offer sign?

So, I think that comes with cost, because we need teachers, and we need them to want to teach, and we need them to get benefits. So I think we should be motivating pay incentives for teachers to learn sign in their college courses and offer that curriculum to their students, and just really like push that in schools.

So that's just one thing, focusing on the diversity topic would be cost. Like we said, we personally have one car. We have two or three jobs between the two of us and four, truthfully. So cost is a big considering factor. For me. Inclusion in education, and in the medical field. I don't want -- Colin, actually, he mentioned something about parents that refuse to sign.

And yeah, that is true. But personally, I've seen many parents that have no idea, they're completely clueless that there are signing resources out there, that there's Deaf support out there. And that's because they're first sent to doctors. And it's just, like, nonsense.

So I think we need to find a way to connect doctors and education to Arizona Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing so that we're starting here, start right here with this group of people. For Deaf children.

>> COLIN DENNY: I'd like to speak to that. Kellie, you brought up -- like colleges providing courses in their curriculum. I think most special education programs should include ASL, not just basic ASL. But more exposure, increased exposure, so that we have -- because we have so many students all over America, right?

It's not just an issue in Arizona. There are many areas in the country that are rural and out there. If people can learn it, in their special ed curriculum, if they could learn ASL, and then, you know, they could know -- they could do it for their own pleasure, or they could minor in it, or whatever. But I agree with you that it should be part of a curriculum.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: I think that's a great example of how diversity can mean a number of things. It's not just race or ethnicity. It could be origin. It could be gender. It could be

financial, socioeconomic status. A Deaf person who might have additional disabilities or whether or not they are in a signing inclusive environment or another environment, it's a number of things.

Our panel has run out of time, but I would like to see if there are one or two burning questions from the task force that they'd like to ask, they can send it in the chat, or turn their video on to ask their question. So, if any members of the task force would like to ask one or two questions to wrap up this panel portion?

There was some feedback for Kellie, well, and for everyone, suggesting comments in the chat as well. So if anybody would like to review those in the chat for additional resources, we can provide that in the chat as well.

Any burning questions from the task force? All right. Maybe they're processing the information and digesting what you've shared. I appreciate your time today. It's been a lot of information. I've taken a number of notes, things to think about and consider as we continue this work from the medical perspective journey as well as from a late deafened perspective, and for those who move into the state and the diverse populations that we've discussed.

So thank you, you three, so much for joining us today.

>> COLIN DENNY: Thank you for having us. Thank you.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: And I see a number of comments from individuals thanking you as well.

I see another resource that has been shared and a website for world languages that you all can refer to as well. Thank you for sharing the resource. Some really great resources in the chat. Thank you for that.

All right. Well, thank you three, and you all can take care.

>> COLIN DENNY: All right. Bye-bye.

Wonderful. Wow. What a great panel. I didn't realize the number of perspectives, and I had to remind myself that we can't just consider a Deaf person. We have to consider all of the various components of their identity. And I didn't realize that Colin was identified later in life as 12 1/2, and Kellie -- and there was the Hard of Hearing Deaf identity mixture, and then Latrina shared that she was born in Dallas, and then moved to Arizona, and has been here since.

So it's really nice to see the other aspects of perspective as we consider various ideas and suggestions. So that was really nice. I'm hoping that we can process that information and try to include some of those recommendations as well.

I think, if there are no questions or comments, general questions or comments that you would like to type in the chat, then we can move on to the next item in the agenda. But I will wait just a moment to allow you the opportunity.

Okay. I think we're ready to move right along with subcommittee updates. I will -- I'm on slide number 7 right now. So we are ready for those subcommittee updates. I'd like to see if someone from the assessment review committee is here to assist?

>> JENNIFER SCARBORO: Hi, I'm Jennifer. So we met recently as a group, and we discussed the different states, what they are doing in other states, what they're using. We compared some states who have already made some decisions in terms of assessments that they're using. Some have identified -- there's a very limited number of assessments.

For example, California has identified one for spoken English and one for ASL. But that's all. We thought that that might not be a good model for Arizona. We did look at some other states who had many different assessments. And we also thought that that might not be a good model for Arizona either. It would be too many.

So we're trying to look at what would be an appropriate fit for us. Plus, there's the additional challenge of having birth through 21, and to be honest with you, many of us really did not know that that was the expectation. We did come in to this task force thinking that we were going to be focusing on birth through 5. Because that's what it has been.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Wow.

>> JENNIFER SCARBORO: And it was only recently that we learned that it was going to be birth through 21, which kind of threw us for a loop. We are trying to think about how we're going to focus on that large of an age range, though.

So it is an addition to what we initially thought we would be doing. And many people involved are -- you know, frankly, their expertise is in that birth to 5 area. So to think beyond age 5 is a different story.

So asking around and looking at other states, asking people in other states what they're doing for those older groups, beyond age 5, many are asking us the same question. Many of them don't know what to do as well. So that's a big challenge.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Uh-huh, yeah.

>> JENNIFER SCARBORO: Now, we did decide to focus on vocabulary. Vocabulary assessment. So we -- you know, we did finally make a decision. So that's our focus.

Christina Rivera volunteered to take the lead on the spoken language piece.

And then Karina Johnson is going to take the lead for the ASL piece. So that's the plan currently.

We're adding our subcommittee meetings, and the regular meeting, plus we're having other meetings as well to discuss -- you know, smaller discussions, small group discussions to discuss other ideas. We're gathering information on other assessments. We're researching. Trying to find out what people know about different assessments.

Because, you know, we feel a little bit under the gun right now. We're feeling the pressure as to whether or not we're going to be ready for the June 8th meeting.

I have to tell you, we're not quite sure about that. We just -- honestly, we're not feeling that we'll be prepared for that. So at this time of the year, it's -- kind of a bad year for many of us. Teachers. People working in academics. It's difficult right now. It's busy. There are final exams going on, graduations are going on, school for the Deaf is having its graduations.

Everything is wrapping up. The school year is wrapping up. So anyway, it's been tough. So I have my fingers crossed that we'll be ready. I'm hopeful. But I'm also a little reluctant to tell you for sure that we will be ready.

I just -- I feel that we might not be. Part of the challenge is that we are still unsure as to what our final product needs to be. Other than a list. We are envisioning that we'll have, you know, age gradations as we go along. Some attempts will be appropriate for different age groups. Different assessments for the next age group as the children get older.

But is that it? Do we recommend who pays for the assessments? Do we make recommendations along those lines? And how will there -- how will the training happen for those assessments. Who will provide the assessments? Do we provide them? Do we do all of that? I mean, that is a whole nother list of recommendations to have done by June 8th.

So, that's kind of the thing. We really don't know what the expectation is. And, you know, is it just the name of the assessment? Is that all you're asking of us? To just give you the name of the assessment? We may be able to do that by June 8th. But to do more than that, on each of the assessments and answer each of the questions that I just mentioned would be tough, because you're probably going to need all of that.

But I don't know that we'll be able to come that by June 8th.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: I appreciate your honesty and being direct and clear about what some of the frustrations are in your report. I think that we can continue to communicate openly about some of the challenges and sometimes we open a can of worms, and we realize what's ahead.

So, I think it's great that you're actually looking at other states. I think that is very impressive that you've had the opportunity to survey other states and do that research. I think we can use the resource that has been provided of the six different states that was shared previously. And then your concerns about what's ahead is something that we will look at.

We have the report template on slide 8, we'll be talking a little bit about that. But the goal is to share the findings basically in the spreadsheet and the subcommittee work and whatnot, related to ASL and spoken English.

And there will be two other components in addition to the shared findings, and that will be challenges you've identified, which you mentioned some. And that might be that there are a number of different resources available in which to select, and the other thing might be the needs for training or financial needs or some of those other issues that you expressed so that we can talk about the challenges that we've identified so far, and not necessarily have to look so much into the challenges ahead.

But as a part of that, you can look at the next component of the template, which would be the next steps. And that might be that there's much more work to be done. We have to look into who will provide the training or the funding or the assessments or whether or not we need to develop a new assessment.

So I think that at that point, ACDHH and the state of Arizona, or maybe even the State legislator can do some of that work that we bring forward to them for those next steps.

So at this point, we're basically focusing on recommendations and rationale for those recommendations in those three components of the template.

So, you'll share your findings, which will probably be the bulk of that template, which is the work that you've already done. And then I realize that you didn't recognize -- or didn't know this entire scope of the work. So that might be an area where you can talk about how you didn't have time to focus on those older ages.

And that might be a need for further work is additional research on the ages beyond age 5. So I'm comfortable with that, and I am hoping that that will give you a picture that you're a little bit more comfortable with as well.

I just want to make sure that if there are any other questions, comments, or anything from other task force members that we open it up at this time. Okay, seems there are none. Thank you, Dr. Scarboro, for your committee work that you've shared with us.

And the next is the demographics and data committee. Great. Kendra.

>> KENDRA BENEDICT: Hi. Jennifer and I work very closely together as well as Michael Olivier, who is on this meeting with us. So some of what I might say will echo some of what Jennifer said.

There have been a lot of frustrations. Our most recent subcommittee most recently met a week or two ago, and it only consisted of three of us. And one of those is Beca. And then me and Tricia Waddell, assistant principal. There just couldn't be a worse time, not only of the year, but in education right now, after two years of COVID, it is broken.

And I can't tell you how many times Michael's had to shut down the preschool PDSD this year, because we didn't have enough staff to keep kids safe, let alone educate them.

So these were realities that, it's just what it is. And one of the things that we talked about when we met was, we all have a great amount of respect for this project. And it's not a small undertaking. I mean, it could be someone's dissertation research. And personally, I feel -- I really felt this listening to our panelists today.

I feel like we already know all of this. As the individual who oversees the birth to -- all birth to 3, and preschool services for Deaf and Hard of Hearing in the state. I know every one of those things those people said, because we work with the families and they tell us.

So we know those are the problem. We know what the problems are. I don't need to give you data to show it. We all know it. The research shows it. I remember when I was doing my master's in '94 and went back to do my doctorate in 2008, the research hadn't changed. There was more research, but it showed the same thing. I mean, other than small strides here and there in the field.

But by and large, we know what the problem is. Let's spend this time that we're together fixing it. Doing it. Doing the work.

The mom, you know, she lives in a rural area. That's my biggest concern. I can't manufacture Deaf people and put them out in rural areas so that children have exposure to native language users. Let's talk about the reality and what can we do. Because I do think there are solutions. Not perfect, but I do think have a lot of ideas. And my staff have a lot of ideas.

But we need support from outside of agency to bring these ideas to life and see if they'll work.

So this is just kind of my personal plea. I know I might sound, like, I don't know, not as calm as I typically can be, but it's really -- it sits heavy on my heart. Because I look at my teachers struggling every day to try and provide the best evidence-based practices they can, and how do you do it in a rural area, how do you do it when you don't have any staff.

While I understand now that we're going up to 21, I really think we've got to start with a hyperfocus on birth to 5. We all know that we learn more during those years than we do collectively the rest of our lives.

And assigned classes -- you know, in elementary school and on up are great. Hearing children get to preschool having heard hundreds of thousands of voices, modeling perfectly intact language. Deaf kids, profoundly Deaf kids, rarely is that the case. So what are we going to do as a community of this field to address that, and can we, and how, and to what extent.

Specifically with regard to the data that we've been talking about, that we could collect, again, we don't have it. We've identified the assessments. We've identified the data. We've identified possible resources for the data. We already know there's problems with the data. We already know there's problems with the validity. We do know that it's not easily accessible.

We do feel that we should have one central repository for that data, and we're certain that other states have probably done that, so why recreate the wheel. Let's see how they've built those repositories.

So that was some of our conversation last week. I know it mirrors a lot of what Jennifer said. I know we are all invested in this work and we want to do it work and we want to spend our time wisely. So that's all.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Thank you, Kendra, for your honest views. They are so valuable. We've been in the field for so long. We know the issues, they've been identified and we feel a little bit stuck on how to make changes to what's happening.

And this really is just scratching the surface of the whole process. We can't revamp everything in just this work. This will be the beginning of a lengthier journey. And that's where the recommendations will come into play. We can make recommendations on where we need to invest our time and efforts, and where we need to make improvements, where we need to establish a repository and make recommendations in that effort to have two or three people focused on comparing assessments or comparing the work of other states.

And I think that that's fine. This is where our report will, as it's been assigned by the bill, is going to provide a snapshot of where we are, so that they can confirm what these people are going through on a daily basis. Based on this report.

And we can show that to the legislature and say, yes, these are the challenges that we have, and these are the resources that need to happen. So, it's important that we identify the urgency in making these things happen by way of a unified report. And you had something you wanted to add?

>> KENDRA BENEDICT: Yeah. So, Tawny, based on what Jennifer's told you so far that they have, what we have, is that sufficient for now? Like is that going to be the report? Or do we need to -- because we're, like, stressing about this. Like, what -- is that sufficient for now? Now we just put it in a report?

Or do we go out and collect all the data? Where are we?

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: No, no, no, no. Yeah, no, no, no. I agree. You can't do it all. You can stop looking and stop collecting data, and at this point, I think we need to look at the information we have and complete the report template so that you can share your recommendations for future work.

I agree. It's not something that we need to resolve in this moment or gather additional information. I think the information that you've shared today, both of you, is already very valuable to provide a picture for those on the legislature to see the areas that need to be improved upon related to there bill, because they haven't had the opportunity to access this information prior to this.

So I think both of your committees so far are on track, and you're doing wonderful work.

>> KENDRA BENEDICT: Okay. That helps. I do hope I haven't come across as negative. I

realize I might sound that way. That's just from my own frustrations and having been in this for so long. And not being able to get to where we want to go.

So we're 100% onboard. We just want to utilize the expertise in this room and move forward.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: I agree with that. I feel you. I feel frustrated as well. I feel like sometimes I can't sleep at night knowing that Deaf children and their families don't have complete access to services. So we are in this together.

And again, this is just the beginning of our journey together. And the idea is that this report will spark accountability to make sure that these items become permanent record of what we are seeing, and the evidence that we are seeing at this point.

Thank you, Kendra, for sharing.

Any questions or comments from the entire task force?

Okay, great. So our next committee is systemic connections. Mollie, would you like to share on that?

>> MOLLIE HARDING: Hi. Good morning, everyone. I will also echo Kendra and Jennifer and Tawny. I also feel like I can't sleep at night, because I can't get audiology students to look at Deaf children from a perspective other than devices and from the medical lens.

And so that is something that I work very hard on myself, and it causes me to lose sleep. So, that's where I'm at, too.

In regard to our portion of the task force and our project on the systematic connections subcommittee, you know, we do have some positivity to report because it feels like we have found a little bit more of a clearer path forward as a group, and we're getting more -- we're getting better at working together.

And we're having more productive meetings. So, you know, we do have some positivity to report there. Here's a little bit about where we've been. We reviewed current roadmaps and the agencies that are involved in the birth to 3 age range as well as the 3 to 5 age range. So we did -- we reviewed all of the agencies involved in services for a child from birth to 3 back in March, I believe.

And then we did 3 to 5 back in April. And so we're going to be working on K-12 and beyond at our next meeting.

So during the last task force meeting, I gained a lot of knowledge from all of you. So I'd like to take this time to bring to you what we found about the agencies involved in services for children from 3 to 5, and just make sure that we haven't missed anything.

So, first of all, we have a couple of avenues for children who are 3 to 5 in receiving services. The first one is that they might not have even been identified with hearing loss yet. And if they are identified in the 3 to 5 age range, they're referred to their, you know, to audiology, as well as to medical providers, but also to their local school district for comprehensive assessment.

If they're already identified by age 3 and they're enrolled in AzEIP, they get a comprehensive transition from Part B to Part C -- I'm sorry, Part C to Part B. And that process is spearheaded by the Department of Education and the local education agencies. And so, the local school districts, of course, can compose the IEP, and they create the IEP team.

And they choose where a child will receive services. That could be in childcare centers, in private preschools, or private preschools for children. Developmental preschools, Head Start programs, ASDB preschool in Phoenix and Tucson, and that could be no preschool at all, if the family feels they don't want to send their 3-year-old child to school.

If that's the case, they can still receive developmental therapies like speech and occupational and physical therapies through their local school district.

We identified that the Deaf mentor programs are still available until the age of 5. And also raising special kids provides guidance in navigating the whole system and getting services through school.

Previously, somebody mentioned in the last task force meeting things about first things first. I was a little unclear about what first things first can provide. If anyone has experience with that, would you pipe in here?

If not, my subcommittee can do a little bit more extra digging on that.

>> SUZY PERRY: Hi, everybody. It's Suzy Perry. My understanding is that first things first sponsors quality first programming in childcare centers, existing childcare centers. And so they -- there could be funding for families to attend the program. But primarily, it's designed to ensure that there's quality in programs.

So they support practitioners to utilize, you know, high quality preschool practices.

>> MOLLIE HARDING: Okay, Suzy. Do you have any ability to clarify for me what's the difference between First Things First and Quality First is?

>> SUZY PERRY: My understanding is that Quality First is an initiative under First Things First, that the different regions can sponsor. And so the regions decide how they'll use their funds. And so if there's a big need for quality in preschool programs that are in their region, then they will offer that.

But there's been such a big change about what's happening with the quality first initiative, that I'm not really sure, like, if that's actually happening currently. Or if it's the grandfathered in programs are participating in quality first sponsored by First Things First. I'm sorry I don't have more information than that.

I think that's the ballpark.

>> MOLLIE HARDING: Okay. So my next question then is for Tawny, because it seems like there are a couple of agencies that provide funding for programs, but they don't necessarily provide the

services. So do we need to include these agencies that provide funds, or just the ones that provide services?

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: I would say focus on services as a priority, but if you want to make notes or put an asterisk that discusses some of those additional findings, that's okay. But you don't have to put that necessarily in the chart or the spreadsheet.

>> MOLLIE HARDING: Okay.

So then we have one final agency that we identified that provides services, and that is the DDD. And children with hearing loss will qualify for that, only if they have additional disabilities like autism, cerebral palsy, or cognitive and intellectual disability.

So does anyone have anything else to add about the three agencies that provide services in the 3 to 5 age range in Arizona?

>> SUZY PERRY: Can you say that again?

>> MOLLIE HARDING: Yes. I asked if any of the members had any knowledge of other agencies that provide services in the 3 to 5 age range to Deaf or Hard of Hearing children in Arizona? Other than the ones I mentioned.

>> SUZY PERRY: Well, when you asked about funding, it made me think about the funds that are available to childcare facilities who have children with disabilities attending them. So that they get extra funding to be able to support them.

So, it's sort of a small connection. And I was just going to try to get that information for you.

>> MOLLIE HARDING: Thank you, Suzy. I think we have identified that. Is it called the ESA?

>> SUZY PERRY: No.

>> MOLLIE HARDING: Okay.

>> SUZY PERRY: ESA is through the Department of Education. Empowerment scholarship account. And that is available for families to take their -- if their child has an identified disability through the school district, that they would be able to access their state funds and use those as they see fit.

>> MOLLIE HARDING: So you're talking about something else, a different funding opportunity. Okay, sure. I'd like to have more information on that.

But otherwise, it seems like we have identified all the agencies that are involved in providing services. Our panel identified it seems like there certainly are some gaps.

Next month, we're going to be looking at -- in our meeting, I believe it's this month. We are going to identify the agencies involved for children in school, K-12 and beyond.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Great. Thank you so much for sharing your progress, Mollie.

I would also like to see 504 and the ADA can be mentioned in services, other than the IEP, because I know that there's a nationwide trend that more Deaf and Hard of Hearing children are being put on a 504 plan instead of an IEP plan. If early intervention is effective and that child is speaking or signing at the appropriate age level, then sometimes they don't -- they aren't considered as having an extra need or disability.

So if they're identified as having a disability and it's impacting their education, like if somebody is 3, and they already know their ABCs and they've already started to scribble or write at that level, then they may have pre-literacy skills already in place that don't need to be an on IEP. So they might just have a 504 plan rather than additional services.

So we definitely want to make sure that we're including the needs of those children as well and where they fall. So it might not be different agencies, but different procedures for that child, if that makes sense, because that might be an impact for the K-12 environment, but maybe not so much from the 0 to 3 environment.

So we want to make sure that we cover all aspects. Does that make sense, Mollie? Okay, great, thank you. Just wanted to make sure we captured that.

Are there any questions or comments for this particular subcommittee on the systemic connections?

Okay, great. Well, I'd like to thank all three committees for their terrific reports. So that we have a good understanding of where they are at this point.

I'd like to move on to the next slide, which is slide number 8. I'm sorry, it's slide number 9. And at the top, it says report template. Our hope is that the subcommittees at their next meeting -- and I'd like to encourage those of you who missed your subcommittee meetings to try to participate at the next meeting as much as possible, so that we can have greater participation and better dialogue and better use of that time together.

So I definitely encourage you to participate.

And with that, I'd like to extend an open invitation, if you would like for me to participate in your subcommittee meetings, I'm more than happy to be there as an observer, as a note taker, or whatever is needed, so that I can have a better understanding of your work if you feel comfortable having me there.

So I definitely can try to participate. You won't have to worry about my schedule. I can accommodate your schedules.

For the report template, the goal is to have some things we can wrap up as much as possible. I know that we have some issues with older children in K-12 environments. That's fine. We can continue to work on that. But I would like to commit some time to working on this report template. And that template I will be sending all of you as a Google Doc through your chair and through the ACDHH staff liaison. Probably by tomorrow.

And with that template, it's just a one-page form that you can report your findings, link to your -- link to the chart or spreadsheet, link to any videos you've seen, or any relevant information that should be considered related to your committee's tasks.

And you can pull links from documentation that you already have. However, that looks -- we're more flexible with.

Once you've completed the findings portion, I'd like you to share a little bit about some of the challenges you've identified. Maybe as bullet points that you want to just briefly explain. That's fine. Whichever you feel is the easiest way to express those challenges or gaps that you identified in the process.

We want to make sure that we identify the areas where there's room to grow in these areas. So there's no limits on this. Don't worry about funding limitations or staffing limitations. Don't let that make you hesitate to identify those items on your list of bullet points. And again, with recommendations, we want to take that same perspective. Don't worry about the funding so much, as much as what you'd like to see as an ideal resource.

So, on the template, you'll have your recommendations. And you won't necessarily need to prioritize those recommendations. They don't need a rating. You can just identify a wide number of recommendations that make sense based on particular age or maybe short-term recommendations versus long-term recommendations, however you want to identify that in your report is fine.

So, you would identify your first recommendation would be to do such and such thing, and then you'll want to include a rationale of why you're making that recommendation. Just a brief rationale for each recommendation. So you'll do the same thing for recommendation number two, identify what needs to be done, and then the rationale as to why that needs to be tone.

And then, you know, it might be because you've run out of time, and you can't complete that. Or it might be that you're making this recommendation because it's a staffing issue, or whatever the case may be. You can identify that in your rationale. So those are the three components, the findings, the challenges, and the recommendations.

And once I get those items from all three committees, then at the June 8th task force meeting, we'll be sharing those -- it's a one-page template. It's okay if it's a little bit longer, a little bit shorter.

On the June 8th meeting -- after the June 8th meeting that will allow me to type a draft of our final report that incorporates all of your findings, including challenges and recommendations in one place. We'll share a little bit about the background, the information on the task force, what we set out to do, who was on the task force. And provide appropriate credits.

And then, we will offer that out for the public forum on June 18th to share with the greater community. And we're hoping that we have representation from each of the committees on that public forum. I know that some people might have conflicts on Saturday mornings, but we did want to make sure that we opened it up to the community on a day that somebody wouldn't have to miss work.

So we really had to work to identify that Saturday morning as the date that had the least amount of conflicts for our public.

So that will be June 18th on the morning, and I will again facilitate that forum, and we can share the draft report, and perhaps subcommittee members can pop on for a few minutes to share some of their background and their findings, and the idea is that individuals in public would see that there are actual humans behind this effort.

It's not just a bunch of robots generating reports with recommendations, that we actually have people who care with unique perspectives that work hard every day, and think deeply about the issues surrounding this bill.

So that the public can see it's not just me as a facilitator, it's actually you all who are doing the work. You all are on the front lines, and behind the scenes. You're working with families. You might even have families so that they can see how much human perspective has been considered as a part of this effort.

The final report will be available in three languages and three modalities. It will be available in American Sign Language, English, and Spanish. We will also have image descriptions and it will be available in Braille as well. So we will make sure those are available, and we're focusing on compiling all of those recommendations in those various languages as well.

And the goal is that we will review the templates. Do the best you can at the next meeting. It doesn't have to be perfect. We know that we can't solve all of the world's challenges in this next one report. So the idea is that we're identifying and documenting our findings, so that we create a path for future work. And that incorporates all of the diverse and rich experience and the depth of experience involved.

So we've had a terrific task force and wonderful subcommittees with great participation, and I appreciate your work, finding time in your busy schedules to make this happen.

I know that many of you have mentioned that this is not the best time of year for this, and it's definitely something that we didn't think about in terms of how it's impacting those that work in education with graduations and semester wrap-up and things that come before the summer in this environment.

So I apologize for that. And I will try to think ahead as best as we can to avoid adding more pressure on you in the future. We would like to be there to offer support. And in that same vein, you definitely don't need to make the report look pretty or finalized. I will be the only people seeing these reports. So a rough draft with your main points is fine. So don't worry about making sure it looks pretty.

And if there's something that I have a question about, I can follow up. And I can make sure that I create a more polished report to be provided in English, American Sign Language, and Spanish to show all of your hard work. I'd like to represent you as well as I can.

And we'll polish that up and make sure it's something presentable for the public.

Any questions, thoughts, comments about that? I welcome them now.

Okay. I think we're probably ready to be thinking about the next steps and to have a little review.

I would like to make sure everyone has that June 8th date saved, because that will be our next task force meeting where we share our templates and discuss as a larger task force. And I know that you have two subcommittee meetings left, so I encourage you to try to participate as much as possible with those committees, and then extend an invite to me if you need me there.

And then we do have the public forum on June 18th. All of you are welcome to attend, and we hope that you all have identified at least one member of your committee that can attend, so that we have representation from the task force at that public forum.

I know that it's a Saturday morning, but we do want to make sure that it's accessible to the community in accommodating their work schedules as well. So those are some important dates to keep in mind. Oh, my slides are a little bit off numbered here. We're on the last slide at this point. Thank you all for your input.

And next step would be to attend your subcommittee meeting, and the next task force meeting on June 8th. So, be thinking about how to wrap up your report template, and then we'll be ready to go at that June 8th meeting to review what we have so far and make sure that we translate everything that we have found into final recommendations.

I'd like to thank you all at this point, and if you have anything, any final thoughts to add, you're welcome to do so.

Okay, I see some conversation in the chat for subcommittee, so that's great. A doodle poll. That's great. I can't imagine life without doodle polls, really. I don't know how people find time -- share time to have meetings. How did we do it before doodle polls? I'm not sure. I seem to have forgotten.

Okay, Suzanne, I think you asked a question about where to get funding. So hopefully that can get sent directly to Mollie. And if you're not sure how to contact her, you can ask your subcommittee chair to make that connection for you. Sure thing.

Oh, it looks like some committees already have dates for their next meeting. That's great. Glad you all worked that out.

Thank you, everyone, for participating today. I very much appreciate it. And the Deaf, Hard of Hearing, and DeafBlind children and families, thank you as well. Have a great rest of your day.

Thank you, Chyla. Okay, I think it's just us at this point.

>> SONIA SAMANIEGO: Perfect. I think it went very well. I think our panelists did a wonderful job in sharing their stories, and really, I love how they said meeting the families where they're at, that is something that I have always shared, meeting the families where they're at.

We don't know -- and one thing that I don't hear very often anymore, but I'll just say Colin really shared some very important things of, you know, really thinking of Maslow's hierarchy. Unfortunately, we have a lot of our agencies that don't consider those things anymore, and really seem to lose that and the importance of really connecting with our families and meeting them where they're at.

So I was very, very grateful for them being so vulnerable. And just genuine.

>> NIKKI SOUKUP: It was an excellent panel with diversity and the various perspectives that they brought. I know some people said that they were already aware of the problems, but not everyone is, really.

So it was good for them to share those issues, and I would like to perhaps maybe edit some of the great statements that were captured in today's meeting and share them on social media, so we can talk a little bit more about how we can utilize the information that they shared and the stories that they shared to support the work that we're doing with the task force.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: I agree. I knew that they were a little bit concerned about the recommendations and that there were a number of different stories involved as a part of this. And some of the experience with families and professionals and all of the stakeholders and players.

I think I could have had six panelists. I don't think three might have been enough. But I do think that, as Sonia mentioned, it was really nice to see that it was very family-centered and shared some of those family values and didn't necessarily talk so much about the child, but more about connecting with that child, and that was a really wonderful reminder of how we focus so much on the services, but we don't always think about the family and the greater community and the resources needed for them to build those connections in their community for parents or for those on the reservation or in rural areas versus urban areas.

And I enjoyed the panelists very much.

>> SONIA SAMANIEGO: One last thing that I forgot to mention. I think it was Kellie who said it. Who said, every child who is Deaf should start right here with the commission, start their journey right here with the commission, and that is one thing that I have really tried to, you know, just share throughout the years, as we should be that source where families are -- if they're diagnosed, or whether it's late onset or at birth, it should be to the commission, that that start in their journey should be with us. And so for her to share that, it was, again, something that I thought was very, very meaningful.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Yeah, it was good to know that. I agree. To make that

connection.

>> NIKKI SOUKUP: It was really interesting, because Texas recently, I want to say two years ago, cast a statute where their statewide outreach center would be listed as the main point of contact after birth, to share information with agencies, I think Department of Education, I'm not sure.

And so that's something to really consider in terms of the legislature and the legislation because we'll have to look into that. As to what specifically a person is supposed to do once they're identified. As Deaf or Hard of Hearing or with hearing loss.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Yeah, I'm curious if the subcommittees -- I know that they have talked about the centralized repository and clarifying information and resources, and so I'm curious if some of the next steps will come about in terms of maybe ACDHH volunteering to be that repository, or something of that nature, as we move forward.

Well, I thought the panelists were very interesting. The subcommittee reports were also interesting. I think that's where everybody was able to exhale a little bit and be confident that they can do this work. So I tried to be encouraging in that area.

I know that, you know, once we're in crunch time, that always happens. People are doing the work and they're feeling good and confident, and when it's time to actually create a final product, everyone hesitates and everyone starts to think that they can't complete the work, and they run into a wall at that point.

But we just have to remind them that the wall doesn't exist, and it's okay, they can continue their work and move forward, because they're already doing great work. So it was fine.

>> BECA BAILEY: Yeah, you know, I think it's just human nature, right? To want to have a solution. We want to have solutions. And yet, that was kind of the frustrating part for me too because, you know, when I was trying to do these meetings, I was like, wait, wait, wait, just like you said. This is just a snapshot, though.

It's just a snapshot. We don't have to have all of the answers right now. We focus on what we see, what we're finding, and what we find on that. But it seems like we're not -- it seems like we don't have a lot of information. It seems like we don't have access to all of that. It feels like maybe we're not ready to do it. Like we have nothing to give to you, Tawny, for the final report.

But as you mentioned, it's just go with what we have. You know, that's the data that we have.

So I was kind of, like, trying to be encouraging. I know it's hard, but --

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Yeah. You know, the timeframe is tough, too. We had five months, and some task forces do their work over two-year periods. So I knew five months wasn't going to be enough to solve all the issues. We can just make recommendations.

So you know, I felt bad when Kendra said she wanted to talk about what to do and how to solve these problems, but at this point, we don't really have the time to complete all of the steps. I think at this point, we just needed a shared understanding and a unified approach to challenges and recommendations.

And once we said that, I think people were more comfortable with it. Because once we can identify those issues, then we can invest the time and money and staff needed to make those recommendations come to fruition. But we don't have the authority to complete all of those steps.

I think that we just needed to show the need and the support so that we can identify the funding and the individuals that can make that happen. That we have some evidence in place to begin that work.

I think all sounds good. I'm already starting to think about what this final report will look like and the information that we've gathered thus far. So I've made some notes. And I think we'll be ready. I'll wait for those report templates from the committees first, obviously. And we'll get those by June 8th.

And then that's where we can review and cut-and-paste and make sure that any notes are clear, and then we'll discuss how to handle making sure they're accessible in the other languages and formats. So we'll try to do that. We don't have to necessarily brainstorm that right now. We can do that at our next team meeting and I will take care of the ASL version and the Spanish translation as well.

>> NIKKI SOUKUP: What was the name we discussed last time, the name of the person we could contract with?

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: That was Monica Keller.

>> NIKKI SOUKUP: Okay.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: She's at the University of Arizona, a Ph.D. student, focusing on language, culture, and literacy.

>> NIKKI SOUKUP: Got it. ASL consultant. Okay. I see her specialist -- her specialization now. All right. Getting her Ph.D. okay.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Yeah, she's focused on American Sign Language and her master's was in ASL education as well. I know that she's also been on language policy and planning for University of New Mexico. I chaired with her on that. And many people recommend her because she's very organized and does translation.

And very reliable and detail-oriented. So she's terrific to work with when it comes to translation. And also, it's nice that she's actually an Arizona resident at this point.

And then I contacted the Spanish company that I used before, and they said that just what I need to provide for them, and I can take care of that. Monica's in. We just have to complete the contract paperwork for her. So just let me know when those items are confirmed.

>> NIKKI SOUKUP: Will do.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: And correction to the interpretation. We don't need to complete the contracted paperwork. I will do that on my end for the final report when I provide my fee, then it will include those additional services as well. So I don't think we had ASL translation there in the initial quote, but that is something that we'll be adding.

And I would also like to send thank you letters and a small token of appreciation to all of the panel members as well. So I will work on that.

And is there anything else that we need to discuss before we wrap up for today?

>> BECA BAILEY: Just one thing I'd like to put out there. I would like to be there for the next subcommittee meetings to kind of just help calm things down, because not all of my subcommittee members were here today. So I thought that May 25th at 11:00 -- I think you might have already accepted. I looked, I think you accepted the invitation. I wouldn't mind if you would just attend that subcommittee meeting with us.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Will do. Yep. It's 11:00 to 2:00?

>> BECA BAILEY: Right, three hours.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Right. It's not two hours anymore, it's three hours. And then -- yeah, I think the Senate is still talking about whether or not we're going to get rid of daylight savings. That sure would be nice, wouldn't it? We'll see.

All right. I think that's all. Thank you all for your support. You are the true backbone of this committee and the work that's being done. And I can see that everyone has benefited from your support and your stability to help them move through the process and remember that the wall that they keep thinking of does not exist, and that they can move through it.

>> BECA BAILEY: Thank you so much. Thanks.

>> TAWNY HOLMES HLIBOK: Thank you all. Take care.