

ARKANSAS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

MARCH 12, 2026

10:30 A.M.

A P P E A R A N C E S

BOARD MEMBERS:

MS. ADRIENNE WOODS, Chair
MS. LISA HUNTER, Vice Chair
MR. JEFF WOOD
MS. LEIGH KEENER
MR. KEN BRAGG
MR. RANDY HENDERSON
DR. GARY ARNOLD
DR. AARON ABBOTT

NON-VOTING BOARD MEMBERS:

MR. JACOB OLIVA, Secretary of Education
MS. JEANIE WILCOXIN, ATOY

ALSO APPEARING:

MS. STACY SMITH, Deputy Commissioner - DESE
MS. COURTNEY SALAS-FORD, ADE Chief of Staff
DR. DARRELL SMITH, Assistant Commissioner
MR. DANIEL SHULTS, Chief Legal Counsel I
MS. ASHELYN ABNEY, Education Division Director

LOCATION:

ARKANSAS DIVISION OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION
- Auditorium/Zoom
#4 Capitol Mall
Little Rock, Arkansas

I N D E X

Page

ACTION AGENDA 3

1. Application for District Conversion Charter by the
Little Rock School District at Hall High School . 6

2. Consideration of the Arkansas Better Chance Program
Renewal Grants for FY27 54

3. Request for Waiver - LA-25-004 - Jacqueline Mills . . 3

4. Request for Waiver - LA-25-005 - Pamela Wyatt . . . 72

Court Reporter's Certificate 82

1 committed to moving forward to making a decision
2 today or?

3 MS. SALAS-FORD: I mean, if you start the
4 hearing, I believe you can still table your decision
5 until a later meeting, if that's something you wanted
6 to do.

7 MR. WOOD: Seems pretty efficient to just wait
8 and grant her the continuance that she's requested.

9 CHAIR WOODS: Do we have to motion and second
10 that, or can we just move it to -- we can just
11 continue?

12 MS. SALAS-FORD: I think a motion would be best.

13 CHAIR WOODS: Okay.

14 SECT. OLIVA: I think that was a motion.

15 MR. WOOD: Move to grant --

16 CHAIR WOODS: Okay.

17 MR. WOOD: Move to grant Ms. Mills' request for
18 a continuance.

19 DR. ABBOTT: Second.

20 CHAIR WOODS: Seconded. Okay. So I have a
21 motion by Mr. Wood. I have a second by Dr. Abbott.
22 All in favor of continuing, say aye.

23 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

24 CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed? Hearing none, we
25 will continue.

1 Thank you.

2 Any other changes?

3 SECT. OLIVA: I don't have any changes, but I do
4 just want to put in a plug and thank the Board
5 Members that were able to join us this morning at
6 Boone Park Elementary School and tour the facilities
7 and find out firsthand from teachers and leaders
8 about the difference they're making and students'
9 lives here. And it was so -- such a wonderful visit,
10 really encouraging. We're really proud of the work
11 that they're doing. And I think we should publicly
12 state that we appreciate the tour and I'm very
13 encouraged by the work they're doing.

14 MR. WOOD: I would echo that and even say, you
15 know, sometimes when we've had the Little Rock School
16 District, North Little Rock School District came as
17 in our December meeting --

18 SECT. OLIVA: F district.

19 MR. WOOD: -- as an F district and a lot of us
20 asked some tough questions and I, you know, did not
21 shy away from asking tough questions of them. I
22 think they should also be applauded for impressive
23 work that they're doing in a challenging
24 neighborhood, in a historically challenging school.
25 That was an impressive tour this morning. So I

1 commend them.

2 **I.1. APPLICATION FOR DISTRICT CONVERSION CHARTER BY THE LITTLE**
3 **ROCK SCHOOL DISTRICT AT HALL HIGH SCHOOL**

4 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. Moving on. We will go to
5 our first action item, which I believe the presenter
6 is Dr. Wright, for the application of the district
7 conversion of charter by Little Rock.

8 DR. WRIGHT: Mr. McGee will excellent speaking.

9 CHAIR WOODS: Oh, excellent. Thank you so much.
10 You can proceed.

11 MR. MCGEE: All right.

12 Good morning. Dr. Olivia -- Oliva, excuse me,
13 and the rest of the Board. My name is Carlton McGee.
14 I'm the proud principal of Hall High School. And
15 today I'm going to present to you our application for
16 our charter.

17 All right. So -- all right. So -- let me get
18 this up. All right. As you can see, our mission and
19 vision -- and I'm going to be brief with this. Our
20 mission and vision really encourages students to
21 empower themselves every day to design their own
22 future. We prepare students for the three Es,
23 enlistment, enrollment and employment. And of course,
24 we have a -- I do want to emphasize, but I think
25 there was some misconception about some things. This

1 is a school where students attend daily. It does
2 have a virtual component, but the main part of the
3 school is daily -- is attended, excuse me, daily.

4 In terms of the model, we're going to -- we want
5 to use a valid model where teachers provide direct
6 instruction. And Edgenuity is the platform that we
7 intend to use for -- for the virtual component and
8 for the curriculum that will support teacher
9 instruction. Every student will have a success coach
10 who will work with them personally. We will -- we do
11 intend on having a 200-student cap on enrollment.
12 And we intend to educate grades 9 through 12.

13 In terms of student population, and need, again,
14 what we seek to do is to provide an alternative model
15 for parents, for students and families who may seek
16 something other than the traditional school model.
17 This, again, will allow students to kind of work at
18 their own pace, provide support when needed and allow
19 teachers to really zero in on the gaps and strengthen
20 student learning. The curriculum is once again
21 provided by or given through Edgenuity. It is
22 already approved by the ADE. Students will also have
23 access to concurrent credit, AP courses, CTE
24 pathways. All of our students are in CTE pathways
25 right now. We intend to keep it that way. All

1 students will be in CTE pathways. Teachers will use
2 real-time data provided to them by the platform in
3 order to provide intervention, extension, to meet the
4 students' needs and to take the students to where
5 they need to go academically.

6 So this slide shows the course -- shows course
7 catalog -- courses, excuse me, from the catalog. We
8 offer a comprehensive set of core courses across all
9 four content areas, including multiple AP options.
10 Of course, I'm not going to read each one of them,
11 but students have the ability to have a regular
12 course load, high school experience course load, just
13 like they would at any other -- any other school.
14 Nothing will be shortchanged on that end.

15 In terms of academic goals, we want to have, of
16 course, 95 and above graduation rate, at least an 80
17 percent CTE pathway completion rate, and above state
18 average growth for our overall growth as well as our
19 fourth-quartile growth. Students are monitored, like
20 I said, on a daily basis through the platform, and
21 teachers provide whatever help and assistance is
22 needed. We will have an advisory, what we call an
23 advisory period, and during that period, a number of
24 things will take place; but one of the main things
25 that will take place is what we call our tier-two

1 interventions, and that's where teachers -- it's
2 outside of traditional class time, but teachers will
3 be fooling students who need extra help, need extra
4 time in order to complete assignments, things of that
5 nature.

6 In terms of community engagement, we held a few
7 different meetings with teachers, with students and
8 with parents and community members. That's where we
9 got this model from. Students wanted something where
10 they could work at their own pace. Parents wanted
11 something that allows students to receive the help
12 and assistance that they felt like their students
13 deserved and needed. And so we built this model
14 around the feedback that we got from the community.
15 In terms of impact and implementation, this expands
16 the options for families in Little Rock, in LRSD.
17 Again, our own school board approved it back in
18 November, and we hope that -- provided that we get
19 approved here, that we open the doors in August ready
20 to invite students in and embark on this journey.
21 Hall High School gives families in Little Rock
22 something that, you know, we don't currently have,
23 which is the blended model, the teacher instruction
24 with the virtual support and of course, like I said
25 before, the virtual school is a component for

1 individuals who want a pure virtual option. We
2 already have that, but that's going to be a part of
3 this as well. But the main body of this institution
4 will be students who come every day, receive
5 instruction from teachers, from -- get the support
6 that they need, and we use the virtual component as
7 the curriculum and the support for our students.

8 Questions.

9 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. We'll start with you.

10 DR. ABBOTT: I'd just like to hear more about
11 the rationale behind the model and how, I guess, what
12 makes you think it is going to be such an advantage?
13 I hear you saying that this is going to be great for
14 students, but in what way?

15 MR. MCGEE: So there's research -- there's
16 research that shows that blended the model of -- the
17 2022 research was a meta-analysis that showed that a
18 blended model did better than a traditional model in
19 many cases. Like I said, we want to provide that.
20 It's based on the feedback that we get from the
21 students and the parents. There's also a component
22 of project-based learning that we're incorporating
23 into this. And so -- and, you know, that's been
24 time-tested that that absolutely provides a good
25 experience and a good educational opportunity for

1 students. So -- and students wanted something where
2 they could work at their own pace. And according to
3 the research, the 2013 -- no, no, excuse me, the 2020
4 research was on project-based learning. The 2013 one
5 talked about how using technology with teacher
6 instruction supported students and was able to fill
7 in the gaps that oftentimes in a traditional setting
8 is difficult to get to. And so the research that
9 we've looked at and the feedback from the parents
10 drew us to this point.

11 DR. WRIGHT: I'll add just a few other things.
12 One of the big advantages to this program is that all
13 the rest of our high schools are very large and
14 follow a traditional high school model. We have a
15 lot of parents. Right now, Hall is about, minus the
16 SpEd kids is about 300. And so we have a lot of
17 families who just prefer to have a much smaller
18 environment. We have a lot of families who prefer to
19 have a much smaller environment. However, when we
20 run a 300 high school based off of the current
21 staffing accreditation standards, which is very
22 expensive, Hall right now has one of our highest per
23 people expenditures because it's just so small. But
24 the waivers that will be available to us with this
25 particular charter model allow us to keep that small

1 high school setting using Edgenuity to deliver the
2 curriculum but also using teachers to make sure kids
3 are supported. They're provided the interventions in
4 this small setting is what makes this very attractive
5 to our families. They -- we heard through all of our
6 communities, they're just families who do not want
7 the large traditional high school models that we
8 have. And so this would be something that would be
9 different.

10 Also, because this is a huge campus, we also
11 have a couple of other alternative programs that are
12 all moving on campus. So this particular program, if
13 approved, will be on Hall's campus. We already have
14 our virtual academy, which has been in existence for
15 a couple of years, that will remain on Hall's campus.
16 We're moving our middle school and high school ALE
17 program to Hall's campus, and our ACC program, which
18 is our program for over age, under credited students.
19 So basically Hall will become virtually, not
20 virtually, it will become a campus that basically
21 will house all of our alternative education programs
22 in one place. A lot of these programs currently
23 don't have access to media specialists, guidance
24 counselors, social workers, but since we're able to
25 convince -- to condense all these programs on one

1 campus, all of these programs will now have
2 additional resources in terms of social workers,
3 media specialists, counselors, even some electives
4 that we weren't able to offer in some of the smaller
5 areas. And so this will be a big alternative ed
6 campus that we believe many of our families will want
7 to choose. We already have 200 kids signed up
8 already, over 200 kids signed up already, even though
9 we don't have the approval yet; so this is our last
10 step to hopefully make that happen.

11 CHAIR WOODS: Dr. Arnold?
12 Leigh?

13 MS. KEENER: Yeah. I had some questions about,
14 tell me more about the advisory groups. You
15 mentioned the tier, it's an opportunity for tier-two
16 interventions, but I imagine not every student that
17 we enrolled will require that. What will that
18 provide for those students?

19 MR. MCGEE: So during advisory time, we do also
20 -- that's when our coaching time happened where
21 teachers are working with students, success coaches,
22 excuse me, where teachers would be working with
23 students on a number of different things. What we're
24 kind of planning out right now, this is the
25 preliminary and early stages, is on Mondays would be,

1 like, check-ins, where we check in with students on
2 grades. We'd have SEL check-ins as well, things of
3 that nature. Wednesday would be college and career
4 day, where we talk about post-secondary planning.
5 What is it that students want to do? How do we get
6 students from where they are to where they want to be
7 in their adult life? Tuesdays and Thursdays, we're
8 looking at school-wide intervention or extension,
9 just depending upon, you know, what the student
10 needs. And Fridays, we're looking at club day and
11 having various clubs in the school and that be the
12 day that function and things.

13 MS. KEENER: So it sounds very similar to what
14 my twins experience now in 6th grade that they follow
15 through the year with a set group of students, with a
16 set adult, someone that is truly an advisor for their
17 advisory period. Will your students also have a set
18 group and an adult that is sort of their connected
19 person --

20 MR. MCGEE: Yes.

21 MS. KEENER: -- within the building?

22 MR. MCGEE: Yes, during advisory, they would
23 have that same success coach/teacher every day.

24 MS. KEENER: Great.

25 MR. MCGEE: And we want to make it yearly

1 successive. So, like, if I get a student in their
2 9th-grade year, I will see that student throughout --
3 to their senior year.

4 MS. KEENER: Yeah. That's amazing. That's
5 great. Thank you.

6 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: So, you know, I really
7 appreciate the effort to utilize that campus, because
8 it is large. But I also appreciate this -- the
9 feedback that you're getting from the parents and the
10 community around that there's a need for a smaller
11 environment. So how are you going to balance, like,
12 bringing in these other programs onto campus while
13 maintaining that really small feel for these 200
14 students?

15 MR. MCGEE: So our school will be in a certain
16 section of the school. I don't know if you're
17 familiar with Hall High School.

18 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Not really. I've just
19 driven by.

20 MR. MCGEE: Okay.

21 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: It is big.

22 MR. MCGEE: Yeah, the school, while it is kind
23 of a block almost, but there are kind of sections to
24 the school. And so Hall High School would be in one
25 of those sections of the school.

1 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Okay.

2 MR. McGEE: We would share the cafeteria, but
3 that would be at different times.

4 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Okay.

5 MR. McGEE: And we would share the media center.
6 We will share the gym as well, but again, the gym
7 will be at separate times.

8 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Right. Yep. That's great.
9 I mean, just really keeping everyone segregated in
10 their own areas without a lot of overlap. That's
11 great. Thank you.

12 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you for your presentation.
13 You mentioned a couple of things that I think is
14 critically important to the success of the program.
15 Number one, being success coaches, and number two
16 being CTE pathways. Can -- do you mind elaborating a
17 little bit on the framework of CTE and how the
18 success coaches work on behalf of that?

19 MR. McGEE: So -- or -- how the success coaches
20 work in conjunction with the CTE.

21 MR. HENDERSON: Yes.

22 MR. McGEE: Oh, okay. So yes, our students --
23 all of our students are in the CTE pathway from the
24 10th grade on the 9th graders will take what's called
25 freshman -- a freshman academy course where they

1 learn about the various CTE courses. So that --
2 through their success coaches, they will talk about
3 and do some assessments that will kind of guide them
4 towards whichever CTE pathway might most interest
5 that student. It is our hope and what we want to
6 construct is something that when a student chooses a
7 CTE pathway, they find so much fulfillment in that
8 pathway that they stay in that pathway. What we want
9 to try to avoid, and we can't always avoid, is
10 students who get in the pathway and then, you know,
11 jump into another pathway. It happens, but we do
12 want students to be completers, and so we want them
13 to be satisfied with the pathway that they choose.
14 Success coaches would also work with our CTE
15 coordinator to do internships, to put students in
16 internships. Right now, we have a partnership with
17 UAMS, and they just finished their job shadowing
18 opportunities. And two weeks from now, no, three
19 weeks from now, after spring break, we will have our
20 white coat ceremony where all the students who
21 participated and completed the program will receive
22 white coats, and their parents will come and pin
23 them. And there's a pin associated with the program
24 and things of that nature. So through the success
25 coaches, again, students, like I said, will be

1 assessed and driven into those pathways and
2 opportunities for real-life experiences, on-the-job
3 experiences, will be provided through the CTE
4 coordinator.

5 MR. HENDERSON: Thank you.

6 CHAIR WOODS: Mr. Bragg?

7 MR. BRAGG: With a blended model, what would a
8 typical day look like for a student?

9 MR. MCGEE: It -- for the most part, it would
10 look like, in any other traditional school, you come
11 and, you know, you stay in class for 90 minutes, and
12 the bell rings, you transition to another class.
13 Within the class, it would look like -- you would
14 receive a 30-minute mini-teach or mini-lesson. Then
15 students would have the opportunity to work on their
16 work, which would be provided through Edgenuity. And
17 teachers will move around, providing feedback,
18 providing assistance and support wherever needed.
19 And then towards the latter part of class, that would
20 be the opportunity for perhaps an assessment or to
21 start working on the project-based learning
22 activities that the students will be engaged in.

23 MR. BRAGG: So that individual works within that
24 contained class?

25 MR. MCGEE: Yes, sir.

1 MR. BRAGG: Okay. Thank you.

2 MR. MCGEE: Now, are you talking about -- well,
3 there are some things where -- where there's
4 cross-curricular work if that's what you're asking.

5 MR. BRAGG: Yeah.

6 MR. MCGEE: Yes, there will be opportunities for
7 cross-curricular work, especially through
8 project-based learning.

9 MR. BRAGG: Okay. Thank you.

10 MR. WOOD: Mr. McGee, would you speak a little
11 bit more about the virtual nature? The -- how much
12 of the student body do you anticipate being fully
13 virtual? And by that, I think maybe my understanding
14 of that and maybe everyone else's understanding might
15 be that they're at home, that they're not on campus.
16 I think I have hesitancy endorsing much more virtual
17 learning. I think there's a couple options
18 available. COVID taught me through my experience, as
19 a parent, that the virtual learning generally didn't
20 work the way maybe we all hoped it would. And so any
21 -- anytime there's a discussion about more virtual
22 learning, I'm a little concerned about that. And you
23 know, maybe other people on the Board share that
24 concern. So could you elaborate a little bit on the
25 balance of how much is going to be pure virtual

1 versus the other options?

2 DR. WRIGHT: So I know sometimes it gets
3 confusing when you talk about it because our virtual
4 academy is functioning now. It is a separate part of
5 our district program that just happens to be housed
6 at Hall campus. In order to qualify for our virtual
7 program, which is 100 percent online, you have to
8 meet certain GPA requirements. You have to
9 demonstrate your ability to work independently.
10 Right now, we have a small number of people. I want
11 to say maybe 40 to 50 families that are in our
12 virtual program. It only serves, I believe, middle
13 school from high school.

14 MR. WOOD: Okay.

15 DR. WRIGHT: So that is -- that option will
16 still continue. It is separate from what we are
17 proposing. This particular model is just housed on
18 the same campus. So those are two different things.
19 What gets confusing is that we are using Edgenuity as
20 a curriculum platform for the course and the program
21 that we're proposing to you. But those kids will be
22 in school every single day working with a teacher.
23 We're just using the courses within Edgenuity as,
24 like, the curriculum, the curriculum for the courses.
25 But the 100 percent online virtual program is totally

1 separate. You have to meet the criteria to be within
2 the program. It will just be housed on the campus
3 where it's housed now.

4 MR. WOOD: Does that virtual program you're
5 talking about had a separate name?

6 DR. WRIGHT: Right now it's just part of Hall's
7 LEA.

8 MR. WOOD: Oh, it is?

9 DR. WRIGHT: Yes.

10 MR. WOOD: Okay.

11 DR. WRIGHT: And it will continue to be
12 separate.

13 MR. WOOD: So it will be under Mr. McGee's
14 supervision?

15 DR. WRIGHT: Yes.

16 MR. WOOD: Okay. But you wouldn't -- it sounds
17 to me like you wouldn't consider that to be part of
18 this?

19 DR. WRIGHT: No. There is a blended virtual
20 component to the program that we're proposing, but
21 the 100 percent virtual program is not a part of what
22 we're proposing. It is a part of what will be housed
23 on the campus.

24 MR. WOOD: Fair enough.

25 DR. WRIGHT: And that program is existing

1 already and has been in existence for a couple of
2 years.

3 MR. WOOD: Yeah. And so when you say there is a
4 component of what you're proposing today that is
5 blended virtual, you're talking about students in a
6 classroom --

7 DR. WRIGHT: Yes.

8 MR. WOOD: -- in a desk, watching a screen of
9 synchronous or asynchronous instruction occur?

10 DR. WRIGHT: Yes.

11 MR. WOOD: And a human being in the room --

12 DR. WRIGHT: Yes.

13 MR. WOOD: -- a teacher, a supervisor, there to
14 supplement what is learned on the screen?

15 DR. WRIGHT: Yes. We know that for the majority
16 of our students, in this particular program, we don't
17 believe that they are able to work independently and
18 teach themselves independently. We're just utilizing
19 the platform for the curriculum piece of courses.
20 But it will have its own teacher. They will have
21 success coaches monitoring their progress. It does
22 allow them to work at their own pace. So some
23 students may be working faster ahead of others. But
24 no student in this particular program will be taught
25 100 percent virtually.

1 MR. WOOD: Okay.

2 DR. ARNOLD: Madam Chair?

3 CHAIR WOODS: Please.

4 DR. ARNOLD: Is the 200-enrollment cap embedded
5 in the charter, or is it inflatable?

6 DR. WRIGHT: It's inflatable. We -- for our
7 first year, we set a cap of 200 just to give us time
8 to work out all of the kinks to make sure that we're
9 able to operate the program smoothly. Honestly, I
10 didn't think we will have more than 200 families that
11 would be interested in the first year. I'm kind of
12 surprised that the number of folks who have signed
13 up. Right now is over 200. But we want to be
14 careful not to bite off more than we can chew. This
15 is the first time that we're attempting this. So we
16 want to keep it as low as possible. But if we find
17 that we're able to have and see some success with it,
18 and there's more demand, we will, you know, add more
19 kids, add more students at that time.

20 DR. ARNOLD: Okay.

21 And a quick question for Dr. Smith, just to get
22 to the -- Darrell, just to get the Department's view
23 on this. I was curious, as you walk up, how this
24 fits the charter strategy of the state?

25 DR. SMITH: Absolutely. Great question. Thank

1 you, Dr. Arnold.

2 In a state that -- obviously that values choice,
3 this is another great opportunity for to produce
4 choice within a district. And so, you know, we
5 certainly are encouraging our districts to expand
6 choice within their district and with the communities
7 they serve. So this actually fits really well with
8 that choice landscape that we're proposing and
9 proposing in the state.

10 DR. ARNOLD: Okay.

11 I'll ask my final question is probably your
12 question, Dr. Wright, as to why this was pulled in --
13 from in the last meeting. It doesn't really matter,
14 but I think that your commentary today helps us
15 understand your local situation better and the remedy
16 that this charter solution addresses.

17 CHAIR WOODS: I do have one question. How do
18 you address failures? So if you see a student --
19 obviously, this is voluntary, they're signing back
20 for it. What accountability checks do you have in
21 place if the student just really isn't thriving? Is
22 that something they can pulled at semester?

23 DR. WRIGHT: Yes.

24 CHAIR WOODS: Can you talk about that?

25 DR. WRIGHT: Yes. So the beauty is, with the

1 success coaches, part of their responsibilities will
2 be to monitor every student. They have their own
3 individual, personal high school plan. And so the
4 success coaches will -- one of their responsibilities
5 will be to measure the progress. Also, on the same
6 campus, we have a couple other programs as well. So
7 let's just say we have a kid who's not successful in
8 this particular program, they may be a prime
9 candidate for our ACC program, which works with over
10 age and under credited students. It's right there on
11 the same campus. So we can easily make referrals or
12 advise families to choose other options. I think one
13 of the things that is most exciting to me, we have
14 done a lot of work in Little Rock to redo the way
15 that we do alternative education. So we have a
16 brand-new leader in our middle and high school
17 alternative education program, and it is 500 percent
18 better than it's ever been. But one of the
19 challenges that we're finding is our families are
20 getting really engaged, families are feeling excited
21 about the fact that their kids are doing so much
22 better in the alternative school environment that
23 some of them don't want to go back to their large
24 high schools. And so we're running into issues with
25 not having a place to send them. This particular

1 program could be a place that they can go to because
2 it's still smaller. It's still more of a hands-on,
3 smaller approach with the success coaches. And so we
4 can transfer kids among programs that will all be
5 housed right around the same campus.

6 MR. MCGEE: I did just want to add a little bit.
7 If a student is not seeing success, then we would
8 have what -- we colloquially call it a school-based
9 intervention team meeting and -- to determine, to put
10 some type of plan into place. Or, like you said, if
11 the team sees that ACC recommendation may be better
12 for a parent, then that may be something that out of
13 that meeting, could be recommended for a parent.

14 CHAIR WOODS: Understood.

15 DR. ABBOTT: I have one additional. I'm not
16 sure who the best person to answer this is, is there
17 another model just like this in the state, or is this
18 the first one? Or will it be the first one?

19 Dr. Smith, this might be --

20 DR. SMITH: Repeat your question one more time
21 for me. I'm sorry.

22 DR. ABBOTT: Does this model that they are -- we
23 are about to potentially approve, is this the first
24 one of these type of charter schools in the state, or
25 are there other schools like this in the state right

1 now?

2 DR. SMITH: There are -- so this would be
3 considered a district conversion charter, so that's a
4 different, obviously, that open enrollment charter.
5 So we have currently 33 district conversion charters
6 in the state, and their models differ depending on
7 what best fits the needs of that particular
8 community. So is this unique to the charter sector
9 of the state? Probably not. Is it unique to Central
10 Arkansas? Absolutely. And so I think this is just
11 another opportunity, again, where districts trying to
12 look at the needs of their community and provide the
13 best options they can for those students.

14 DR. ABBOTT: Thank you.

15 MR. WOOD: I have another question or two.

16 I'd like to talk just a little -- just briefly
17 about Hall, just in recent years. You know, Hall has
18 been a struggle for LRSD to figure out, I think, over
19 the years. What have you identified recently to be a
20 cause? Well -- and let me back up. Hall doesn't
21 have an attendance zone right now; is that correct?
22 And it hasn't had one for several years. So students
23 that are there are choosing to go to Hall High
24 School.

25 DR. WRIGHT: Correct.

1 MR. WOOD: For whatever brings them there,
2 whatever motivates them to go there, they're choosing
3 to go there. So what have you found that is the
4 cause for the struggle to improve growth and
5 achievement at Hall over the last few years?

6 DR. WRIGHT: I think it's just the sheer number
7 of students that we have in our district. We don't
8 have enough students for five large high schools. We
9 have enough students for three large high schools and
10 Hall. I think one of the things that motivated us to
11 seek this particular model is that it provides more
12 flexibility in terms of staffing, and staffing is
13 what's driving the high cost to operate Hall. So
14 with more flexibility in terms of how we can staff
15 it, we'll be able to afford it with having a smaller
16 number of students here.

17 MR. WOD: Well, despite the fact that we're
18 talking about a struggling school historically, I do
19 think that Little Rock should be pat on the back for
20 certain improvement over the last several years y'all
21 are doing a good job moving things in the right
22 direction. And, you know, even though this might not
23 be a school that I would choose for my kids or my
24 kids would choose based on just the model alone --
25 and my concern there is more extracurriculars. I

1 don't care irrelevant of this -- you know, I don't --
2 I don't see a traditional experience for students for
3 Friday Night Football and stuff like that but that
4 doesn't mean that this doesn't fit a need for a lot
5 of people because I actually hear the -- a lot of
6 times in this city, whether it's Pulaski County
7 schools or Little Rock schools, that they're giant
8 and a lot of people are looking for a smaller school.
9 And I think this gives that option and if parents
10 want to go there, I think that the district has made
11 the decision to offer it and I support -- I support
12 the charter.

13 CHAIR WOODS: If there's no further comments,
14 then we just need a motion to either --

15 MS. KEENER: Can I --

16 CHAIR WOODS: Yes.

17 MS. KEENER: -- ask a question about -- I was
18 curious about -- and maybe this is my lack of
19 understanding of the schedule -- request number two
20 for school day, instruction time and clock hours. I
21 think I saw one schedule sort of deep in the request.
22 Tell me about the need for that. Are you -- are the
23 students going to be in instruction less than six
24 hours today? Or -- tell me about where that request
25 came in.

1 MR. MCGEE: So again, the virtual is a part of
2 the LEA. And so those students would not be in the
3 normal, traditional school day. The students who are
4 in the blended model under the what we're just going
5 to call Hall High, those students would attend a, you
6 know, normal school day in 90-minute classes. You
7 know, with a regular 30 minutes lunch, 30 minutes
8 advisory and so on and so forth.

9 MS. KEENER: So does that -- maybe I
10 misunderstood, is that they're -- the Department, I
11 suppose, would not consider the virtual option
12 instructional time? Or why -- does that make sense?
13 Like, if they're under instruction, they wouldn't
14 need it; right?

15 DR. WRIGHT: And they can correct me if I'm
16 wrong, but even in the blended model, it is
17 self-paced. And so where, I think, under traditional
18 accreditation standards, you have to -- you may have
19 to be at a course a certain number of minutes of time
20 to get the credit for that particular course, we may
21 have a student who progresses through a course in a
22 faster amount of time. So that's why that waiver is
23 being requested.

24 MS. KEENER: Okay. Ms. --

25 MS. SMITH: Yeah.

1 MS. KEENER: -- Smith?

2 MS. SMITH: So one of the questions that Dr.
3 Abbott asked earlier is, is this being done
4 elsewhere? When you have larger high schools that
5 have more than 200 or 300 kids, you have classrooms
6 that operate this way, and school districts don't
7 have to get a waiver because it's not their entire
8 system; right? They're proposing a very small site
9 with a very small number of kids, looking at a model
10 that's very specific. So this is being done in other
11 places. It's just being done in classrooms,
12 self-paced. But the school district as a whole is
13 meeting their seat-time requirements. Okay. So in
14 this model, it's different because each of their
15 classes is kind of on that hybrid-flex piece that's
16 self-paced. And meeting the kids -- you may have
17 some kids who finish that course faster than another
18 student who may need longer time. Okay. They're
19 being innovative in the terms of, like, this is a
20 very small 200 kids. So as a state, we have
21 requirements for our high schools on certain
22 requirements that they have to meet. Thirty-eight
23 course requirements, the number of teachers, staff,
24 the smaller numbers you get, that's where you see a
25 lot of times schools coming before you that are

1 really small asking for waivers because they have a
2 difficult time meeting all of the state requirements.
3 And so in this aspect, they're coming saying we've
4 got a very small model of 200 kids. These are the
5 waivers we need to be able to proceed with this type
6 of model. If this same thing were being done over at
7 Southwest, they wouldn't have to come before you with
8 some of the waiver requests. But they're being very
9 targeted on what they're doing at this specific
10 campus.

11 MS. KEENER: So I guess I'm still not
12 understanding what part of their schedule doesn't --
13 what students -- which of those 200 students would
14 not qualify as instructional time? Is it the
15 asynchronous, or if they're on campus, whether
16 they're in front of a teacher that's standing in
17 front of them, or whether they're working
18 asynchronous instruction, or why do they need a
19 waiver for clock hours, I suppose?

20 MS. SMITH: Because they're not having that kid
21 sit in that course every single day for that amount
22 of time till the -- the entire semester. So if the
23 student, through Edgenuity, the platform that they're
24 using, which provides a teacher, provides a
25 curriculum, if they finish that course faster,

1 they're not going to continue to sit in that
2 classroom every day just to show up. They're then
3 going to go to advisory periods. They're going to go
4 to -- move to another -- yeah, they're going to move
5 on to their next course within --

6 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: That's the right answer.

7 MS. SMITH: That is the right answer. Within
8 the model that they have set up; right? It's
9 self-paced by the student.

10 MS. KEENER: Well, and maybe it's in the law
11 that I don't understand, but it looks -- the clock
12 hours, that 6-16-102, just speaks about six
13 instructional hours; right? So regardless of what
14 the course name is, are they going to be getting less
15 than six instructional hours a day, I guess, is what
16 I'm asking. And if that answer is no, do they need
17 this waiver? Are we simply getting a waiver just in
18 case there's something? Or -- does that make sense?
19 I don't want to give them free reign to offer less
20 than six hours a day, regardless of what that hour,
21 what that instruction looks like. And maybe that --
22 I don't understand.

23 MS. SMITH: I think that the reason is because
24 it has that self-paced component in it. So I would
25 have to let legal then weigh in on whether or not the

1 waiver piece. We've always asked them to seek this
2 waiver whenever they're doing a self-paced option in
3 which students will get through a course faster than
4 the required amount of time. So this is something
5 that we have frequently seen before, especially with
6 our charter schools.

7 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Yeah, I see your point. I
8 mean, I think it's a great point because regardless
9 of what they're learning, they need to be learning;
10 right? Whether it's -- they're self-paced or not.
11 And I'm sorry, this is not specifically --

12 MS. KEENER: I hesitate to give the option for
13 less when you're telling us it's not going to be
14 less.

15 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Right.

16 CHAIR WOODS: But it could be. So are we saying
17 that we're fine and this is just --

18 MS. KEENER: Discussion.

19 CHAIR WOODS: Yeah, just discussion. And if a
20 kid gets through their work in 5 1/2 hours, we're
21 going to make them do something for 30 minutes just
22 to hit that six-hour mark?

23 MS. KEENER: Shouldn't they be learning for the
24 other 30 minutes? It's like when a kid finishes
25 their essay, do they just sit and wait on the other

1 kids to finish? Or should there be -- and do we then
2 count against that school district because -- do you
3 see what I mean?

4 CHAIR WOODS: Well, but we can give them the
5 waiver or we don't.

6 MS. KEENER: Right.

7 CHAIR WOODS: What I'm afraid of is that we are
8 creating a model where we're incentivizing kids to do
9 busy work and not actually learning. We're saying
10 you have to be here for six hours. What's the
11 benefit of this model?

12 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Or even to, like, hold back
13 on themselves.

14 CHAIR WOODS: Right.

15 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Like, let me just slow it
16 down. Let me just slow down because I'm going too
17 fast. Yeah. So, I mean --

18 MS. KEENER: Well -- and I --

19 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: -- it's a --

20 MS. KEENER: I see this as putting the
21 requirement on the administrators and teachers to
22 engage with the students for the six hours, not on
23 the students to do something for six hours. It's not
24 busy work. It's, are they -- is there a catalyst
25 there driving instruction?

1 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Always knowing what's next.

2 MS. KEENER: Yes.

3 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Right? Like, I do think --

4 I don't think that that's --

5 CHAIR WOODS: I don't think it's our solve.

6 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Yeah.

7 CHAIR WOODS: I think it's their solve. And if
8 we come back in a year and they're like, all of your
9 students are checking out after four hours, that's
10 probably a broader discussion.

11 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: But I think that's just a
12 broader discussion if this is a waiver that we're
13 granting, you know, just generally, not just against
14 this particular application.

15 MS. KEENER: And you know how I feel about
16 waivers. What's the point if we -- what's the point
17 of the law if we waive it? We're like, you're good,
18 go ahead, do four hours, you know. And the idea that
19 just because you can have your credits, the school is
20 under no obligation to continue educating you --

21 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Right.

22 MS. KEENER: -- is a problem to me.

23 MR. HENDERSON: So I guess it would be a legal
24 question. We just said that this is what's in
25 existing right now in the larger schools. So I guess

1 legal will have to make some clarification of what's
2 happening at the larger schools.

3 MS. KEENER: Well -- and I want to focus on this
4 waiver and how it will affect these kids and what it
5 this, you know, charter school is required to do. I
6 don't want to say, well, we've always done it this
7 way, so let's go ahead and continue doing it this way
8 if that makes sense.

9 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Right.

10 MS. KEENER: And I may be missing something.

11 DR. ARNOLD: On the waiver form, request number
12 two on instructional time, the rationale states it
13 enables flexible scheduling to accommodate college
14 class attendance, internship participation and
15 competency best progression. So for me, the issue
16 will be follow through, follow up accountability to
17 these goals. So it's not free time or personal
18 release time or wait around time. It seems to be
19 intended to put them to work in a higher level.

20 MS. KEENER: Well -- and maybe that's where the
21 waiver comes in. Without the waiver, school
22 districts do that and they're required to provide
23 that. Maybe it's the financial, if we remove this,
24 or is this charter school not financially responsible
25 to provide this college level, internship level

1 opportunities?

2 SECT. OLIVA: So I usually try to stay out of
3 this. So --

4 MS. KEENER: No. I want your -- I want you to
5 tell me.

6 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Yes.

7 SECT. OLIVA: So when you think about historical
8 traditional high school approaches is built around
9 that Carnegie. So this is an innovative approach to
10 kind of challenge that status quo, that 60 minutes
11 every day in biology for 178 days equals a year of
12 learning. Is that -- is that a -- is that the best
13 need for all students? It may work for some
14 students, but maybe not all. And I think the
15 question that Dr. Wright and his team is trying to
16 solve is: how do we be innovative and know that a
17 one-size-fits-all approach doesn't meet the needs of
18 all of our students? I think Mr. Wood spoke to that.
19 Like, some families are going to look for that
20 traditional high school experience that has marching
21 band and ROTC and driver's ed. Other families don't
22 want that, and they may have life circumstances.
23 This isn't about giving this school, and per se, a
24 waiver to lower standards. This is giving a waiver
25 to a small set of students, when I hear about 200

1 students, to make sure they have the flexibility that
2 they can personalize each child's schedule. And what
3 I'm hearing is that they're going to sit down with
4 each student and family and write an individualized
5 schedule, and they -- they're just trying to ensure
6 that unnecessary bureaucracy is stopping them for
7 doing what they're doing. It's not about lowering --
8 they're not asking for a waiver of graduation
9 requirements; right? Like, that's not going away.
10 Every student's going to have to meet graduation
11 requirements. Every student's going to have to
12 participate in assessments. We're going to be able
13 to monitor these students' performances. In fact --
14 and I don't want to speak for Dr. Wright, but I think
15 this could be an opportunity to put more kids in
16 concurrent credit, to put more kids into accelerated
17 programs because that's really what we need to be
18 talking about, is how do we create an innovative
19 environment that could be hybrid, that could be built
20 around remediation or acceleration, but it's
21 personalized. And I think the questions we're asking
22 about, well, why do we need these waivers, I've come
23 out of this from the other direction. I think
24 sometimes we create obstacles and barriers for school
25 districts because we're micromanaging inputs. This

1 may be one of those places where I think as a state,
2 we should take a look back and say, why do we create
3 this bureaucracy and all these undue burdens when we
4 can monitor outputs? And I would -- and, you know,
5 the Board's obviously going to decide, but I would
6 say that maybe this isn't the first -- the last time
7 we hear from Dr. Wright and his team about how the
8 school's going. And if we can get this up and going,
9 I have a feeling other districts are going to want to
10 say, wow, you're finding a way to take massive
11 comprehensive high schools that are, like, bigger
12 than shopping malls and creating a personalized
13 individual plan that's working for the student
14 family. Maybe there's something to learn.

15 DR. ABBOTT: And Secretary Oliva, I think that's
16 why I was asking my question earlier about other
17 schools like this because I -- I'm hoping -- well,
18 I'm just saying I plan on approving this, but I want
19 this to be successful, and what I want is for your
20 school to be a model for other schools. So I would
21 love for this experiment to work amazingly well and
22 for us to adopt it across the state. That's --
23 that's my hope.

24 MR. WOOD: Is there a time limit on the waiver
25 request?

1 CHAIR WOODS: Usually they're for a year.

2 MR. WOOD: I just don't see a list of them.

3 CHAIR WOODS: We have made them for a year, but

4 --

5 MR. WOOD: Yeah.

6 CHAIR WOODS: -- that may not be on the form.

7 MR. WOOD: I'm a -- I am a fan of one-year
8 waivers as often as possible if we're giving waivers.
9 And it's not to say y'all figure out how to work
10 around the waiver by one year from now. It's not
11 that at all. I just would like for y'all to come
12 back in a year and tell us how it's going and ask for
13 the waiver to continue and thus give you -- I suppose
14 there would be -- that would be an opportunity for
15 you to justify a longer waiver. You know, to say,
16 hey, look, this is working. Here's what we're doing.
17 Here's how much time we have with our kids when
18 they're not with us. When they're not with us --
19 when they're at our school less than six hours,
20 here's what they're going and doing. I think that
21 would be, you know, convincing to any doubts that
22 this model is working and here's a, you know,
23 four- or five-year waiver or whatever.

24 CHAIR WOODS: I was going to ask Dr. Smith, is
25 there any reason why we couldn't do just a one year

1 and have them come back or is it traditional for
2 charters that we do?

3 DR. SMITH: No. Absolutely because it's -- a
4 typical contract for district inversion is a
5 five-year contract. We could certainly write an
6 amendment in there, so that's to -- for this
7 particular waiver that was waived about a one-year
8 waiver, and then which time they'll have to come back
9 before either you all or the CAP and review that
10 waiver based on how the day's working, how the model
11 is working, and then just report back to us. And
12 then --

13 MR. WOOD: I just don't want it to be taken by
14 the district as any sort of rejection of your model
15 or plan. I just -- I would like to hear how it's
16 going.

17 DR. ARNOLD: Right.

18 MR. WOOD: How are kids spending their day?

19 DR. ARNOLD: So it's less a question of doubt.
20 It's more an opportunity for proof of concept.

21 MR. WOOD: Yeah, correct.

22 DR. SMITH: And certainly we can always do
23 updates, you know, so whether you want to make a
24 contractual waiver, you know, where it's -- where the
25 waiver actually expires, or you just want them to

1 come back and -- you know, we leave the contract as
2 is and then have them come update. And then we can
3 always update the contract if necessary at any point
4 in time.

5 MR. WOOD: So I'm going to -- I would suggest
6 the one-year addendum in there. And the reason
7 being, I'm very forgetful. And next March, I won't
8 remember that --

9 CHAIR WOODS: That you asked for this?

10 MR. WOOD: -- I wanted to hear about this.

11 CHAIR WOODS: So is that a motion?

12 MR. WOOD: Yeah.

13 MR. WOOD: Yes.

14 CHAIR WOODS: A motion to approve with the one
15 year addendum?

16 MR. WOOD: Yes.

17 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. Do I have a second?

18 MR. WOOD: With one year on the waiver request
19 for ACA 6-16-102.

20 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. Second?

21 DR. ABBOTT: I'll second.

22 CHAIR WOODS: Seconded by Dr. Abbott.

23 DR. ARNOLD: With the point of discussion, does
24 it in any way impede the goals of the Department?

25 MS. SALAS-FORD: Well, no. And -- Courtney

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Salas Ford.

If I can interject, because I want to clarify, you're saying 6-16-102, which is the six-hour school day. What they are asking for there, and it's been touched on but I don't think fully articulated out, is that the school has to provide typically a six-hour school day. We're talking about kids who are virtual, working at their own pace. So they might get through whatever the school is offering for a school hour, six day in two hours, three hours, four hours. And so by waiving the six-hour school day, we're saying the student can go ahead on and do something else, whether that's a CTE, concurrent credit opportunity or it could be another class. The clock hour, the standards waiver, is about how long a student has to be working on that subject before they can get the credit. I actually feel like that's what you're wanting to limit to one year, not the six-hour school day. I could be wrong, so -- but I want to be clear which one it is because we're talking about two very different things. One is the school has to offer a six-hour school day regardless of whether the student is there or not. The school district as a whole -- every school district in the state is offering a six-hour school day. But within those

1 schools, you have programs where students might only
2 go two, three, four, five hours a day, to Dr.
3 Abbott's point, happening all over the place. But
4 they don't have to come to you and get permission
5 because it's not a standalone school, a standalone
6 LEA, like Little Rock is proposing. Most of them are
7 just embedded into other LEAs.

8 SECT. OLIVA: There's plenty of seniors that
9 take -- don't take the full day.

10 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yes. Right.

11 SECT. OLIVA: I can promise you that. And they
12 don't need a waiver to do that because the school is
13 open.

14 MS. SALAS-FORD: Right. The standard that they
15 are waiving is the clock hours of how many hours the
16 student has to be engaged in order to earn a credit.
17 And that's what truly allows them to, okay, I was
18 able to do all of the requirements for psychology in
19 two weeks, so now I'm going to move on and go to
20 another course and another course. So I just want to
21 be clear before you all vote which one of those
22 waivers are you wanting to limit to one year, or is
23 it both?

24 DR. SMITH: And I -- maybe I -- maybe a
25 practical example here I think might help too. So I

1 think part of the six-hour day is that they want --
2 so if a student finishes their coursework in three or
3 four hours, and then they want to go off campus to
4 take college classes, well, technically, they're not
5 in the -- they're not on the campus in that six-hour
6 day, but they're still engaged with the course. So
7 part of the reason we're waiving is those kids can
8 then leave campus and go continue their education at
9 a different location. So that would be a different
10 type of credit. And they're receiving -- probably
11 still receiving transcript-type credit. They're off
12 campus. And then -- so it's just a way -- it's more
13 of a nuance of the law, of that code to allow the
14 students the flexibility to not have to be on that
15 campus necessarily for six hours.

16 DR. ARNOLD: Yeah. And that was my point. And
17 that's why when we revisit it, to see how that model
18 works, it'll be more firm in our mind. So I agree.

19 MS. KEENER: Understanding we don't want to hear
20 that a large group of students are finishing in two
21 hours and then out the door and you don't know what
22 they're doing.

23 DR. ARNOLD: Yeah, that's on the district.

24 MR. HENDERSON: Definitely no pressure, but
25 congratulations on being the model if this passes.

1 MS. KEENER: Right. What more --

2 (Sotto voce conversation)

3 CHAIR WOODS: My -- we were arguing over here.
4 Sorry, we're like having a side conversation. I
5 said, but if their outputs are good -- if a kid is a
6 larger group leaves in two and a half hours, and
7 y'all are rocking it in terms of your school grade
8 and everything else, well, again, we've got to start
9 thinking differently.

10 MS. SALAS-FORD: Yeah. And I think this is a
11 model we're starting to see more and more for
12 acceleration opportunities and things where in the
13 past, because kids were forced to sit there for six
14 hours a day or sit and continue to listen to a
15 teacher in a topic that they've already mastered,
16 this allows them to keep going. This allows them to
17 accelerate, do other opportunities, internships and
18 concurrent credit, whatever it is. To Secretary
19 Oliva's point, we're removing those barriers that
20 keep those students who can accelerate from being
21 able to go on and do more and be successful.

22 DR. ARNOLD: And I still don't think we've
23 answered Dr. Salas-Ford's question.

24 CHAIR WOODS: So what are you waiving? What do
25 you want to go one year on?

1 MR. WOOD: I'm not sure it matters. I -- as I
2 -- because I support the model, I'm excited to see it
3 work and become a thing. But I think that when you
4 ask for a five-year waiver of something, we lose an
5 ounce of accountability. And I'm not saying we lose
6 ultimate accountability. I suppose we could revoke
7 the charter after two years if we wanted to. But
8 that puts the onus on us to monitor. And what I'm
9 saying is that my natural tendency is to forget that
10 I did this until a year from now when y'all come back
11 and say, hey, a year ago, y'all only approved one
12 year. You wanted to hear about it. So here we are
13 to present our data. Would you care to extend that?
14 And that helps me --

15 MS. KEENER: Well -- and most --

16 MR. WOOD: -- stay engaged --

17 MS. KEENER: -- won't be here --

18 MR. WOOD: -- in the conversation.

19 MS. KEENER: -- in five years.

20 MR. WOOD: That's true.

21 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Well, yeah, that's the other
22 part.

23 DR. SMITH: Well -- and I will say this to your
24 point, yes, I agree that monitoring is incredibly
25 important. So every year, every charter school is

1 monitored. Every year that we look, we have a
2 report. And so we can certainly provide you that
3 report at the end of every year about the performance
4 of this particular charter. Because if we go through
5 and look at those exact -- at those exact data
6 points, how are we doing academically? How are we
7 doing? Where are the kids going? What courses are
8 the kids taking? Those are the type of things that
9 every charter school in the state is reviewed on an
10 annual basis. And so certainly that report can come
11 to you at any point in time. I'm not -- whether you
12 want the year or not, that's irrelevant to us at this
13 point. But just to let you know that there is a
14 report, and they are monitored on an annual basis.
15 So it's not a five year, we just -- we'll see you
16 later in five years and then we'll see how it goes.

17 MR. WOOD: Yeah.

18 DR. SMITH: Right. I mean, it's annual -- we're
19 looking at them all the time.

20 MR. WOOD: So I think -- I would not be
21 interested in micromanaging the daily schedule of the
22 school and limiting with you must have kids learning
23 a specific topic for 55 minutes per topic. I'm not
24 interested in micromanaging that at all. But I am
25 interested in a follow-up on what are kids doing with

1 their six-hour learning day, you know, and how are
2 y'all guaranteeing that kids are getting six hours of
3 education of some sort in a day and not just
4 disappearing at lunch and, you know, having a good
5 afternoon.

6 CHAIR WOODS: So what if you just approve the
7 waiver with a request that they come back in a year
8 and give us updates?

9 MR. WOOD: Yeah.

10 MS. KEENER: Second.

11 CHAIR WOODS: I don't think I can motion.

12 MS. KEENER: Trying to be efficient.

13 CHAIR WOODS: He has a motion. Dr. Abbott has
14 second.

15 MS. KEENER: Yes.

16 CHAIR WOODS: Right now we're discussing whether
17 or not there's a year -- can we just have them come
18 back in a year and give an update?

19 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Do you need to change --
20 amend the motion?

21 CHAIR WOODS: Well, right now he's -- that was
22 the question. He has motion to approve the district
23 conversion. Is there any -- other than coming back
24 in a year, is there any amendment to any waiver that
25 you're making?

1 DR. ARNOLD: So it's a bolder statement if we do
2 that --

3 CHAIR WOODS: Yes.

4 DR. ARNOLD: -- and this might be the time for
5 boldness.

6 CHAIR WOODS: Still want to do the motion?

7 MR. WOOD: Sorry?

8 CHAIR WOODS: You have motioned.

9 MS. KEENER: I'm lost.

10 CHAIR WOODS: You still maintain that you want
11 to approve the district charter conversion and they
12 need to come back in a year at least to talk to us
13 about it? Understanding that if everybody's failing,
14 they're probably going to pull the charter.

15 MR. WOOD: Yeah.

16 SECT. OLIVA: He would have to amend his motion
17 for that.

18 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Yeah. He has to amend it.

19 CHAIR WOODS: That's fair. So do you want to
20 amend to approve the district charter conversion?

21 MR. WOOD: I don't really know what's being
22 asked of me.

23 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. So only -- all they're
24 looking for is for us to say we -- they had already
25 gone through the Charter Authorizing Panel. Charter

1 Authorizing Panel approved this. We pulled it off of
2 consent, I think, a month or two ago. And so the
3 question is: are we upholding what the Charter
4 Authorizing Panel has already approved, or do we want
5 to modify it in some way?

6 MR. WOOD: Well, I made a motion to approve it
7 with a modification that the waiver regarding
8 6-16-102 be limited to one year. I stand by that
9 motion.

10 CHAIR WOODS: Do you still want to second that
11 motion?

12 DR. ABBOTT: Sure.

13 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. We'll take a vote on it.
14 All in favor of approving the district charter
15 conversion with the one-year waiver on 6-16-02, is
16 that what you said?

17 MR. WOOD: 102.

18 CHAIR WOODS: 6-16-102, say aye.

19 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

20 CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed?

21 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: No.

22 CHAIR WOODS: With one opposed, the motion
23 passes.

24 MS. KEENER: With a one year for all the waivers
25 or one year for that waiver. We're going to stand on

1 one year.

2 CHAIR WOODS: We're going to stand on the year.

3 MS. KEENER: So that's why I think it's --

4 CHAIR WOODS: Okay.

5 MS. KEENER: -- if that's what you want.

6 CHAIR WOODS: Thank you, gentlemen, very much.

7 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: I mean, I think we waived
8 the wrong thing.

9 CHAIR WOODS: Oh. Okay.

10 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: I think we waived the wrong
11 thing.

12 SECT. OLIVA: Thank you all.

13 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. Here's the question: do
14 y'all want to break for lunch now and then come back
15 and do the ABC grant consideration and then the
16 waiver? Do we want to kind of push through action
17 and take a later lunch? If it's up to me, I would
18 probably say to push through, but --

19 DR. ARNOLD: Push through.

20 DR. ABBOTT: I say push through.

21 CHAIR WOODS: Okay.

22 DR. ARNOLD: Five-minute break?

23 CHAIR WOODS: Five-minute break. Sure. We'll
24 come back at 12:05.

25 (WHEREUPON, after a break was taken, the

1 proceedings were resumed as follows, to-wit:)

2 **II.2. CONSIDERATION OF THE ARKANSAS BETTER CHANCE PROGRAM**

3 **RENEWAL GRANTS FOR FY27**

4 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. Ms. Abney, we're going to
5 talk about the consideration of the Arkansas Better
6 Chance Program renewal.

7 SECT. OLIVA: Yeah. And if I could also maybe
8 tee up this item a little bit. And I know annually
9 we come to the Board to talk about Arkansas Better
10 Chance programs and the slots and how they're
11 allocated and how they're moved around. But
12 Ashelyn's joined our agency, gosh, how long is it?

13 MS. ABNEY: Five months ago.

14 SECT. OLIVA: Five months ago, and has done a
15 phenomenal job navigating through some challenges
16 we've had because we've had some federal grants
17 change and state program changes. We're implementing
18 new learning strategies around empowering local leads
19 and upping quality and ensuring kindergarten
20 readiness. So there's a lot of moving parts
21 happening in our early learning space. And one, I
22 just always want to just commend her and her
23 willingness to take on a challenge and do what's
24 right for students and families. But two, I asked
25 her just to do a little bit of an overview of really

1 what is in this kind of early learning space, and how
2 does what we're being asked to approve with the ABC
3 slots fit into a bigger picture on how we're going to
4 make sure that every student and every family can
5 participate in high quality early learning that wants
6 to. So I just want to make sure you have a little
7 bit of background knowledge on what we're asking her
8 to update.

9 MS. ABNEY: Thank you for that.

10 Good afternoon, Board. I think it is good
11 afternoon already. I'm Ashelyn Abney. And like
12 Secretary Oliva said, I'm the new director of the
13 Office of Early Childhood.

14 So I'm going to take you the whole opposite way
15 from what you were just speaking about with high
16 schoolers. And so I wanted to show you this super
17 quick about how we fit within LEARNS. And so simply
18 what this says is that we are tasked with making sure
19 that all of the children are ready for kindergarten,
20 that the families have the resources that they need
21 to make sure that their children are prepared, that
22 we're also looking at the providers and that they are
23 providing for our children a high-quality learning
24 experience, and then also that there are enough
25 affordable seats that are safe that the families can

1 access. And if we accomplish all of those things,
2 then the fifth thing is that our local and state
3 economies will benefit because our families are
4 thriving and not so worried about where their
5 children are going.

6 So like Secretary Oliva said, I'm five months
7 into my role, and I'm super excited about it. We've
8 accomplished a lot already. But we have a lot of
9 work to do. We still have a lot of work still to do.
10 But one of the things that we need to look at is both
11 internally and externally, what are we about, and why
12 are we doing the things that we're doing?

13 So we started way back at the basics that you
14 all know in your daily life and in your businesses
15 that you have to have some core values. And so we
16 started there, and you can see them listed there on
17 the screen. You'll see that the first one is
18 child-centered. And that is what we're about in
19 early childhood. I like to say that we build the
20 foundation for the K-12 world. I feel confident in
21 saying that. I'm a former kindergarten teacher and
22 an elementary school principal, so I know how
23 important it is that children are prepared and ready
24 to come into kindergarten.

25 We use these four core values for every decision

1 that we make on our team. So whether we're looking
2 at the school issues and concerns that we might have,
3 or we're just looking at standard operating
4 procedures, anything that we're looking at, we base
5 those decisions on these four things with the child
6 in the very forefront of what we're doing.

7 Under my leadership, we set up a new team, and
8 it's called the Organizational Effectiveness Team,
9 and I'm super excited and proud about that. This
10 will help us just to make sure that we're meeting our
11 targets of all the things that I just mentioned to
12 you. What you're seeing on the screen there are the
13 high-arching things that we are going for. So like
14 the SOPs, the error reporting that we do over on our
15 federal side, setting up some internal reviews,
16 looking at our grants, and then just overall a
17 streamlined process of what we do.

18 We rely heavily, you all, on local leads. So
19 hopefully you've heard that term before. Our local
20 leads are all throughout the state. And they are
21 tasked with making sure that they are our
22 community-based partners and looking at a child
23 count, like how many children are in a catchment
24 area. And then also looking at coordinating funding
25 requests, making sure that the needs assessments are

1 done, and then also looking at a class
2 implementation.

3 Another thing that we were tasked with is
4 simplifying our licensing. And so prior to me coming
5 in, this was already started. The team had already
6 been working on this. We are still looking at it and
7 reviewing it. There were some changes that I noticed
8 that we needed to make. And so we're hopeful that
9 we'll have that to you all soon, for you all to look
10 at it and see what you think about it and give us any
11 feedback. The licensing standards, of course, are
12 what all licensed facilities in the state have to
13 abide by. So if you're providing a childcare for
14 birth through age five, you will have to abide by the
15 licensing standards.

16 So on the chart there, the little table that you
17 see, I thought you all might find it interesting how
18 many childcare facilities we have and what types
19 there are. So we have roughly 1,800 licensed
20 childcare facilities in our state.

21 All right. So one of the things that I
22 mentioned before was CLASS. So CLASS is where we're
23 headed in terms of quality and making sure that we're
24 improving quality across our state. It is an
25 observation tool that looks primarily at adult to

1 child interactions. And we're very excited about
2 this. We're in the process of working through our
3 quality rating improvement system and changing the
4 way that we define quality, I guess, is the best way
5 to say that. So while we've done a lot of work in
6 the State of Arkansas and our history has been around
7 what you might have heard of, ERS, which is great to
8 have, we're now taking the next step in looking at
9 interactions. And so we're very excited about that.

10 Okay. Before we talk about ABC, I just wanted
11 to give you a little context of our funding because
12 this question does come up a lot in terms of how is
13 it different, School Readiness Assistance, compared
14 to ABC or Arkansas Better Chance. So the School
15 Readiness Assistance, or commonly referred to as SRA,
16 is a federally funded bucket of money, funding stream
17 that we pull down.

18 And so we have -- right now are serving
19 children, like, 14,659, you'll see. And we do have a
20 wait list that's growing, and that does concern me.
21 We -- our wait list has a priority order, and
22 sometimes we'll hear about, well, does anybody ever
23 get off the wait list? Yes, if they're one of these
24 priorities that have been identified. We've been
25 doing a lot of talking, and you might have heard

1 about, back in October of 2025, when we changed the
2 rates for SRA. And we did that in collaboration
3 with many, many people, many partners. Our
4 commission was one of them. And because we're trying
5 to improve our communication, we were having the
6 monthly webinars, and we were talking about SRA rates
7 and the quality payments that go along with it. I'm
8 happy to tell you about -- right now, we have not
9 changed the rates. They have been steady. They've
10 been the same. But it is something that we do need
11 to keep in mind in terms of moving forward and how
12 we're going to sustain the number of children that we
13 have. And so because of some recommendations and
14 trying to be physically sound, we had to put that
15 wait list in place because we -- our spend was way
16 higher than what our income was. It's a totally
17 different funding source than ABC, and that's what
18 I'm here to talk to you all about today. ABC is our
19 state funded childcare. And so you can see on the
20 screen that there are some things that are uniquely
21 different between ABC and SRA, besides just the
22 funding stream. The biggest one that I talk to
23 people about the most is in ABC, you do have to have
24 a licensed teacher there. And that sometimes
25 confuses people between the two different programs,

1 but that is the biggest main thing that I think would
2 be important for you all to just know. In this
3 program -- and I apologize that the table there says
4 SRA in the header, this is the ABC information that
5 you will see that while over in SRA there are a
6 little over 14,000 children served, in ABC there's a
7 little over 21,000. So that's a big difference.

8 Okay. So today I have a couple of action items
9 for you all to consider. So moving forward, for the
10 26-27 school year -- so starting July 1 -- we are
11 requesting that we increase our slots to 23,092 with
12 a total award amount of 107, a little over 107
13 million dollars because we have had a program, a
14 federal program called Federal Pre-K that we moved
15 over, that increased our number of slots. And then
16 the other thing that I wanted to point out to you all
17 is we have had two different entities that have
18 requested to convert their slots from either the PAT,
19 which is Parents as Teachers, or HIPPY. Both of
20 these are home-visiting programs, if you will, or
21 agencies, if you will, and so their slot numbers are
22 changing; and you'll see that on the spreadsheet that
23 was given to you all.

24 So, the two actions for consideration is first,
25 it is about foster care and homeless children.

1 That's very near and dear to our heart, and hopefully
2 to you all as well, and so what we're requesting is
3 that if we have a certain school that has a certain
4 number of slots, and we know about a foster child or
5 a homeless child that is in the area, we do want to
6 go ahead and put that foster child or the homeless
7 child in that school, even though the school might be
8 at its allotted number of seats. So that's the first
9 consideration. And then the second one is we are
10 requesting to be able to allocate 24,000 ABC slots
11 throughout the program year.

12 I'm glad to answer any questions that you all
13 may have.

14 CHAIR WOODS: Can I ask a question?

15 MS. ABNEY: Yes, please.

16 CHAIR WOODS: I just want to make sure I
17 understand the funding block. So the SRAs are
18 federal, the ABCs are state. Are facilities
19 currently receiving both?

20 MS. ABNEY: There are some cases where they are
21 receiving both. Most of the time that happens when a
22 child is in an ABC program. The ABC programs
23 typically run on school hours.

24 CHAIR WOODS: Okay.

25 MS. ABNEY: So if a parent is working, let's

1 say, till 5:30, but the school closes at 3:30, then
2 there could be some cases where that child would move
3 into an SRA, or what's commonly referred to as a
4 wraparound service, so that there would be SRA
5 funding there.

6 CHAIR WOODS: So we really just have SRA
7 facilities, and then we also have -- the majority are
8 state funded? Or no?

9 MS. ABNEY: I wouldn't necessarily say that.

10 CHAIR WOODS: Okay.

11 MS. ABNEY: So think about SRA, SRA follows a
12 family really, let's say. And so they can go to any
13 of those 1,893, 1,800 facilities that are licensed.
14 Whereas ABC, the funding in the slots go to a
15 particular entity and they stay with that entity.

16 CHAIR WOODS: Got it. That's a great way to
17 describe it.

18 Leigh, you want to start? This is your passion.

19 MS. KEENER: Well, I was going to -- I got
20 things to say.

21 CHAIR WOODS: You can start.

22 MS. KEENER: I was going to let others ask
23 questions first.

24 CHAIR WOODS: Well, then I can start on this
25 side. Jeff, Mr. Wood?

1 Mr. Bragg?

2 Mr. Henderson?

3 DR. ABBOTT: The 24,000 slots that you're
4 requesting allocation, is that just something that,
5 like, you're going to hold on to those and allocate
6 them as you need throughout the year or is that --

7 MS. ABNEY: Yes sir, that's what I'm requesting.
8 We want that ability to be able to have 24,000 slots
9 that I can review and look at and see who's using
10 them, what the enrollment looks like, and then I want
11 to be able to move that throughout the program year
12 if I need to.

13 SECT. OLIVA: And one of the things Ashelyn did
14 mention too, as we've been looking at ABC slots --
15 and I don't know how long some of this goes back to
16 -- but historically, if we say we gave a site 20
17 slots, we paid for 20 slots whether students were
18 enrolled in them or not. And so about a month or so
19 ago, we kept saying, we're paying for slots that kids
20 haven't been in all year. We have to stop doing
21 that. And I don't know, we made this suggestion
22 about two months ago. You know, it's interesting,
23 that already we're recognizing that we can take these
24 slots that we're paying for, that haven't been
25 filled, and reallocate them to places that have

1 waiting lists or want to start new programs. Because
2 if you're not on the list, sometimes it's hard to get
3 slots to get a new program. And I think that's a
4 bigger picture of why Ashelyn is saying, like, hey,
5 we've got more probably demand than we have access,
6 so let's make sure we're giving the right amount of
7 access to get the right amount of demand met so that
8 we can make this happen. And one more -- actually, a
9 total side plug, because she's doing amazing work, as
10 we've been navigating through federal grants and
11 funding, even in her short window of time, she
12 applied for a competitive federal grant in preschool.
13 It was a preschool development grant that not every
14 state could qualify for because it was competitive
15 and she received that, like, already and it was
16 around \$15 million.

17 MS. ABNEY: It was 14 point -- 14.741.

18 SECT. OLIVA: \$14.7 million she's already --

19 MS. ABNEY: My team did that.

20 SECT. OLIVA: -- she's already brought in to
21 help keep this work going. So I just always want to
22 congratulate her and the team for going above and
23 beyond because we have made that commitment to the
24 providers that if we can be more efficient, if we can
25 bring additional resources, we want to reallocate

1 that right back out to the field --

2 MS. ABNEY: Right.

3 SECT. OLIVA: -- and support students and
4 families and we've been able to meet that commitment.

5 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: I do --

6 CHAIR WOODS: Yes?

7 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: So, question on the ABC
8 conversions. I mean, so -- and I guess it's just my
9 lack of knowledge between the PAT program and the
10 HIPPY program and, like, going from 27 home visiting
11 slots to 33 in PAT. And then 80 to 40 in HIPPY. So,
12 like, how are they that different?

13 MS. ABNEY: Okay. So that's a great question
14 and I'm still learning myself. So I'm going to try
15 to answer that and then I have an expert in the room,
16 okay? So give me a shot at it first. So what
17 happens is the home visiting network is paid at a
18 lower rate. So a typical slot for ABC is \$5,105 for
19 child. So in home visiting, it's \$1,883.

20 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Okay.

21 MS. ABNEY: And so when you start doing the
22 conversion on that, so when somebody wants to say,
23 hey, I don't want the home visiting anymore, I want
24 to convert it to a center, then my team looks at that
25 to see what is that cost difference; and so the

1 numbers, it's not a one-for-one --

2 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Right.

3 MS. ABNEY: -- switch or conversion. So that's
4 why you'll see that the slots are different. In the
5 Southeast Arkansas Educational Co-op, the HIPPIE one,
6 they were not fully enrolled. And my team and I have
7 been working very hard. Like, they might have been
8 given a certain number of slots, but if they weren't
9 fully enrolled, we had already started doing some
10 reductions.

11 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: I see.

12 MS. ABNEY: And so that takes into consideration
13 that the reduction that we made, converting the HIPPIE
14 slot to a center based, and then given the number
15 back.

16 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: I have got you. Thank you.

17 MS. ABNEY: You're welcome.

18 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: You didn't need help. You
19 nailed it.

20 MS. ABNEY: I did it. Yes.

21 MS. KEENER: Shout out to Brandy in the back
22 because she's always there.

23 MS. ABNEY: Yes, Brandy Ishmon is a rock star
24 y'all. All of my team -- all of my team, really.

25 CHAIR WOODS: Ms. Keener.

1 MS. KEENER: First -- the very first thing I
2 want to address is the wait list. And this is such
3 an interesting thing because we don't like to see a
4 wait list. If a child needs care, we want to be able
5 to provide that care. But the need has not changed.
6 So when we had tighter restrictions and no wait list,
7 man, did we feel good. That does not mean that those
8 thousands of families and thousands of kids weren't
9 without care. They still were. It just looked
10 really good for us. We didn't have a wait list. So
11 when we opened up some of the requirements,
12 understanding that since healthcare requirements have
13 changed, that employers might drop your work hours to
14 29.5, so they don't have to provide you healthcare
15 benefits; right? Well, that also disqualified you
16 from getting care. So we reduced the hours to, say,
17 20, because we knew that was happening. People were
18 working as much as they could, and were still not
19 being offered care. So we loosened those
20 requirements understanding we want you to have a job.
21 What that did is it showed us the true need in
22 Arkansas of care. That wait list has grown daily
23 since it started because those people need care now
24 and they have needed it, even back when we didn't
25 have a wait list. So it is a strange thing, that

1 wait list. We don't like it, but also it's the true
2 picture of what's happening. Now we have this
3 opportunity. ABC requirements are more open than
4 SRA. You've got to be in a lower tier of income in
5 order to qualify for SRA. The state has opted in to
6 loop in kind of that -- a little bit larger group.
7 So if you qualify for SRA, you without a doubt
8 qualify for ABC. So that offers us this opportunity.
9 We have programs that have not filled their ABC slot,
10 and we have kids on an SRA wait list. So what she's
11 asking us to do is allow them to go, hey, you've got
12 ten open slots. I'm going to take two for these
13 foster kids that need care today. And what we have
14 the potential to do today is say, and you don't have
15 to come before us to ask permission to do that. And
16 my understanding is legally they've never had to do
17 that, but they've just always done it. We've set a
18 precedent. So what we're doing now, she's giving us
19 the courtesy to say, hey, we're not trying to do
20 anything behind your back. We want to be reactive,
21 and we want to help these kids that need it today. I
22 don't want her to come to us less. I still want to
23 see her, and I want to hear about it. So my sort of
24 response in the discussion about this with Ashelyn
25 was -- Ms. Abney was that, okay, can you still come

1 and see us maybe quarterly and give us updates and
2 say, hey, we pulled these slots and we're now
3 providing care for this number of kids? And hey,
4 here's a great thing that happened since the last
5 time I saw you.

6 So I guess what I'm asking today, and if you're
7 ready for a motion, I believe it is potentially two.

8 MS. ABNEY: I think so.

9 MS. KEENER: Let's see. I want to get it right
10 and happy to take any suggestion -- wording. I'd
11 like to make a motion that allows the Office of Early
12 Childhood to -- help me out. Give me the right
13 wording. I want to get it right.

14 MS. ABNEY: The main one that I want from you
15 all is I want the ability to take 24,000 slots and
16 allocate them throughout the program year.

17 MS. KEENER: Okay. I would -- I'll make a
18 motion that the Office of Early Childhood is allowed
19 to reallocate slots as necessary throughout the
20 fiscal year.

21 CHAIR WOODS: All right. I have a motion by Ms.
22 Keener. Do I have a second?

23 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: Second.

24 CHAIR WOODS: Second by Ms. Hunter. All in
25 favor say aye.

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(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed? Hearing none, motion passes.

MS. ABNEY: The second one that I would love for you all to support me in is when there is a foster child or a homeless child that might be in an area where I've already said, here's your number of slots, I would love the ability for that program to go outside of their allocated slots to serve a foster child or a homeless child.

MS. KEENER: So I would make a motion that the Office of Early Childhood can have the of flexibility to meet the needs as they arise for foster -- for vulnerable populations. Is that generic enough?

CHAIR WOODS: All right. So I have a motion by Ms. Keener. Do I have a second?

DR. ABBOTT: Second.

CHAIR WOODS: Seconded by Dr. Abbott. All in favor, say aye.

(UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed? Hearing none, motion passes.

MS. ABNEY: Thank you all. I really appreciate it. And we are super honored, let me say, that the Office of Early Childhood sits under ADE. It just

1 makes sense that it's a perfect line. If we can get
2 it right down on my end, then hopefully, you know,
3 with y'all's help, we can get all the children on the
4 other end, like in Hall High School. Well, actually,
5 what I want it to be like Xander, Jack, or -- and who
6 was the other one, Alvin?

7 CHAIR WOODS: Yes.

8 MS. ABNEY: I want to be them. Anyway, we'll
9 work hard to make sure that we're getting the
10 children ready and prepared to do that. So thank you
11 for your time. Appreciate it.

12 CHAIR WOODS: Thank you, Ms. Abney.

13 DR. ABBOTT: Thank you.

14 **I.4. REQUEST FOR WAIVER - LA-25-005 - PAMELA WYATT**

15 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. Next item will be the
16 request for a waiver for Pamela Wyatt.

17 Mr. Shults.

18 MR. SHULTS: Good morning, ladies and gentlemen
19 of the Board.

20 This is a matter for a waiver of disqualifying
21 criminal offense. It was identified processing an
22 application, Ms. Pamela Wyatt asked for a reciprocal
23 teaching license. She's currently a licensed
24 educator in Kansas. Under the rules -- it's a pretty
25 robust process, which I think probably is more than

1 we need today -- but we're allowed five minutes for
2 an opening, 15 minutes for a presentation and five
3 minutes for a closing. With the Board permission,
4 I'm probably going to handle my presentation in my
5 five minutes and allow you to hear from her and ask
6 her questions as you see fit.

7 All parties are to be placed under oath. The
8 Chair may grant additional time as she sees fit. So,
9 the -- I'd like to present the -- I said that. As a
10 general matter, this body is prohibited from bringing
11 licenses for a person that had been convicted of
12 numerous lists, including forgery, violation of
13 5-37-201. However, this Board has the discretion to
14 weigh that disqualifying offense. The statute sets
15 off some factors, including the age at which the time
16 of the incident was committed, the circumstances
17 surrounding the crime or incident, the length of time
18 since the crime or incident, subsequent work history,
19 employment references, character references, and
20 other evidence demonstrating that the applicant does
21 not pose a threat to the health or safety of school
22 children or school personnel.

23 The basic facts, as the Department understands
24 them, are that -- and this we gained from the
25 background checks that we do. Ms. Wyatt was

1 convicted of felony forgery on April 26th, 1999. It
2 appears she was -- that was 27 years ago. I believe
3 she was 22 at the time. Her -- she completed her
4 criminal probation in 2004. Her first -- and I
5 should have said at the outset of this, there's a
6 packet that's been put together that you all have in
7 front of you, has a timeline. I'll hit some of those
8 highlights. Her -- she was first employed in
9 education in 2007 at a private school in Kansas City.
10 She has a bachelor's in elementary education, after
11 which she was employed in a public school in Kansas
12 City. She -- according to her representation,
13 achieved another degree, a master's degree in
14 curriculum instruction, and was subsequently --
15 continued to be employed as a public educator in the
16 State of Kansas. She -- my understanding is she's
17 moving to Arkansas and she applied for a reciprocal
18 teaching license which is essentially what brings us
19 here today. She's provided ten letters of
20 recommendation regarding character and employment,
21 her work history and provided answers to the
22 Department's questions. So based on this information
23 provided to you both from the information you
24 received and from Ms. Wyatt, it appears the Board has
25 a sufficient basis, if it deems this information

1 credible to grant the waiver under the statute and at
2 that point it becomes a question of your judgment and
3 discretion on the grant waiver.

4 CHAIR WOODS: Thank you.

5 MR. SHULTS: If there are no questions of me,
6 I'll let you hear from Ms. Wyatt and then I'll be
7 happy to answer any questions you have.

8 CHAIR WOODS: Ms. Wyatt, I need to swear you in
9 when you get up here. So do you swear and affirm
10 that the testimony that you're about to give would be
11 the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth?

12 MS. WYATT: I do.

13 CHAIR WOODS: Thank you. All right. You want
14 to give us your statement?

15 MS. WYATT: First of all, I want to thank you
16 for taking the time to see me today and to hear my
17 statement. And just to piggyback off what Dr. -- Mr.
18 Shults said, I was 22 years old at the time of the
19 offense when I had this lapse of judgment.
20 Everything in my life up to that point said I was
21 going to be a statistic. I was a high school
22 dropout, pregnant, single mom. And still to this
23 day, honestly, it sounds weird even when I say it out
24 loud, I don't know how that conversation started with
25 a group of people I was involved with. I don't know

1 how the plan formulated. All I know is is that I was
2 stupid enough to follow through with it. And when I
3 was questioned about it, I confessed right away. I
4 accepted my consequences. I didn't try to hide
5 anything. And I worked very hard to comply with the
6 terms of my probation. What I can tell you is that I
7 am not that woman that I was as that young girl. One
8 thing that I have done in my life is I've put people
9 into my life, and I've given them permission to speak
10 into my life, to guide me, to safeguard me. I have
11 been happily married for 25 years. I have five
12 children. I have five grandchildren, one
13 grandchildren on the way -- one grandchild on the
14 way. I worked very hard to achieve my bachelor's
15 degree, went on to get my master's. I've been
16 teaching since 2007. At the beginning, I was at a
17 Christian school where all of their staff did not
18 have to be licensed. You just had to align with
19 their articles of faith. And during that time, which
20 I had started going to school, I did my student
21 teaching in Olathe in 2013, and I got hired by Olathe
22 in 2014. In 2022, I was I'm honored to be the
23 Teacher of the Year for my school district, nominated
24 by my peers, gone on to represent my school district
25 for our region. However, someone else greater than

1 myself got that honor to carry that on. What I can
2 tell you is that education and giving my life to the
3 Lord saved my life. I would not be the woman I am
4 today without Jesus Christ. And I would not have the
5 vision that I have of education without Dr. Edwards,
6 who was a principal of mine in my freshman year. And
7 he took the time to say, you are worth more than what
8 you're settling for. A lot of people that I know
9 could have the same story as me, came from a broken
10 home, parents that abused drugs, divorced early, left
11 to my own devices. I left home when I was 16 years
12 old. And so an accumulation of those experiences
13 probably led me to that decision because I did not
14 have parameters by which I lived my life. I lived my
15 life day-to-day, making choices that felt good in the
16 moment, making choices that helped me to survive in
17 that moment. I've since learned from that. My
18 husband and I are relocating to Arkansas, and I just
19 want to be that guiding light for others, and I
20 believe for the last 16 years of my teaching career,
21 I have been able to do that.

22 You can see in some of the letters that I've
23 provided, even what parents are saying, how I make
24 their students feel because I want students to know
25 that they're more than their circumstance. The

1 opportunities of life are available to them as long
2 as they put in the work; and I did put in the work; I
3 continue to put in the work. I don't have any desire
4 for that lifestyle that I lived so long ago. But I
5 do work daily to be a better person than what I was
6 yesterday.

7 MS. KEENER: I was just wondering if you picked
8 out your grandmother name because you have one all
9 the way, right, your first one?

10 MS. WYATT: No. I have five already.

11 MS. KEENER: Oh, you do?

12 MS. WYATT: And one on the way.

13 MS. KEENER: I'm so sorry.

14 MS. WYATT: So I wanted to be called Nana, but
15 when Carlos started speaking, it came out Nina. So
16 therefore, I'm Nina to all my grandkids.

17 MS. KEENER: I love it.

18 CHAIR WOODS: My grandfather was supposed to be
19 P-Paw, but my cousin, he came first, would say
20 Pa-paw.

21 MS. WYATT: I will have to say though, my
22 11-year-old who -- Xavier this year, has just
23 announced that -- what is a Nina? And so you will --
24 I will call you Grandma. So, you know, a little bit
25 of conflict; right?

1 MS. KEENER: : That's funny.

2 MR. WOOD: That is subordination that should not
3 be tolerated. As the oldest grandchild in my family,
4 the oldest gets to pick.

5 CHAIR WOODS: Yes, that's true.

6 MS. WYATT: And that's how it was in my family
7 as well. So I'll let him and his brother hash it
8 out.

9 MS. KEENER: Well, I think you are the reason
10 that this appeal is available. I'm so glad you
11 decided to utilize this option.

12 Does anybody have any other --

13 MR. WOOD: I would just say there are very few
14 things that should hang around us forever --

15 VICE CHAIR HUNTER: I agree.

16 MR. WOOD: -- and forever disqualify us.
17 Certainly, bank teller forgery 27 years ago is not
18 one of those things. I only hope that people say
19 about me what the people in your life over the past
20 27 years have said about you. So I'm honored to look
21 forward to your work here in Arkansas as a teacher.

22 MR. HENDERSON: I'd just like to add that I
23 believe very strongly in second chances. And also, I
24 admire your courage to stand before us and display
25 that incredible ownership of what you did. As

1 humans, we -- we tend to not want to do those things.
2 And you did it very well.

3 MS. WYATT: Thank you.

4 MR. WOOD: Where are you going to teach? Is
5 that in here?

6 CHAIR WOODS: After that, everybody's going to
7 want you. So I didn't know if you already had a job.

8 MS. WYATT: My husband and I are going to be
9 relocating right here to Little Rock.

10 MR. WOOD: Good.

11 DR. ARNOLD: All right.

12 CHAIR WOODS: Hey, Northwest Arkansas is really
13 nice.

14 MR. WOOD: Robinson High School is just down the
15 road. My kids all go there. So --

16 CHAIR WOODS: Excellent. All right. So can I
17 get a motion to approve the waiver?

18 DR. ABBOTT: I move that we approve the waiver.

19 CHAIR WOODS: Okay. I have a motion by Dr.
20 Abbott.

21 MR. HENDERSON: Second.

22 CHAIR WOODS: Second by Mr. Henderson. All in
23 favor, say aye.

24 (UNANIMOUS CHORUS OF AYES)

25 CHAIR WOODS: Any opposed?

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Hearing none, motion passes.

(The action agenda concluded)

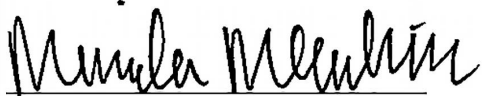
C E R T I F I C A T E

STATE OF ARKANSAS)
) ss
 COUNTY OF PULASKI)

I, Miranda McEntire, Certified Court Reporter #852, do hereby certify that the facts stated by me in the caption on the foregoing proceedings are true; and that the foregoing proceedings were reported verbatim through the use of the voice-writing method and thereafter transcribed by me or under my direct supervision to the best of my ability, taken at the time and place set out on the caption hereto.

I FURTHER CERTIFY, that I am not a relative or employee of any attorney or employed by the parties hereto, nor financially interested or otherwise, in the outcome of this action, and that I have no contract with the parties, attorneys, or persons with an interest in the action that affects or has a substantial tendency to affect impartiality, that requires me to relinquish control of an original deposition transcript or copies of the transcript before it is certified and delivered to the custodial attorney, or that requires me to provide any service not made available to all parties in the action.

WITNESS MY HAND AND SEAL this 27th day of September, 2025.



MIRANDA MCENTIRE, CCR
 Certified Court Reporter #852

