

<b>Location</b>	Zoom
<b>Advisory Committee Members</b>	<p>Paid Family &amp; Medical Leave Director: Lisa Kissler          Paid Family &amp; Medical Leave Act Ombuds: Edsonya Charles          Employer's Interests Representative: Bob Battles          Employer's Interests Representative: Christine Brewer          Employee's Interests Representative: Julia Gorton          Employee's Interests Representative: Samantha Grad          Employee's Interests Representative: Tammie Hetrick          Employee's Interests Representative: Joe Kendo          Employee's Interests Representative: Marilyn Watkins          Employee's Interests Representative: Brenda Wiest</p>
<b>Employment Security Department Staff</b>	<p>ESD Commissioner: Cami Feek          Interim Director, Paid Family Leave and Care: Beth Marchand          Interim Deputy Director, Paid Family and Medical Leave: Matt Buelow          Chief Financial Officer, ESD: Carole Holland          Paid Family and Medical Leave Treasury Manager: Steve Zawojsky          Public Affairs Director, ESD: Nick Demerice          Operations Manager, Leave and Care: John Mattes          Research &amp; Data Manager, Leave and Care: Rebecca Grady</p>
<b>Members absent</b>	Employee's Interests Representative: Joe Kendo
<b>Court Reporter</b>	Sonya L. Wilcox, CCR
<b>Notes Reviewed by</b>	Laura Hagensick

<b>Agenda</b>	<p>Introductions          Approval of March Minutes          Advisory Committee Reset          Program Updates          Current Program Priorities          Reports Update          May Meeting Topics          Open Comment          Adjourn</p>
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**MR BUELOW:** Good morning, everybody. Welcome to our April 2022 Paid Family and Medical Leave meeting. I'm the interim deputy director of the Leave and Care division. We oversee the Paid Family and Medical Leave program for the State of Washington in the Employment Security Department. Welcome to our April 2022 advisory committee meeting.

We have got a pretty packed agenda today. I look forward to the conversations. With that, let's just go ahead and get started. So, the agenda for today, we will do some introductions and look

at minutes for the last couple of months and see if we can get those approved. We want to talk about some advisory committee reset that we have already talked about here but just a little more detail, give an update on the program, the trust fund, our ability to dip below and borrow that money from OFM, which we are very thankful for our advisory committee team for helping get through.

We want to talk about what our current priorities are right now on our plate, give an update on some upcoming reports, get agenda items for next month, and then get open comments. I want to make sure we have time at the end for open comment. So, I will be watching the time, and if we haven't wrapped up agenda items by 11:45, we will wrap up then to make sure we have time for the public to make any comments they have.

Really quickly, I will talk about the meeting structure. Please keep yourself muted, unless you are speaking, and we don't take questions, typically, in the advisory committee meetings. We take comments. So, if you have a question, please try to phrase it as a comment, and we will do that at the end.

So, with that, I do want to do introductions of the advisory committee. But before introducing the advisory committee, I do want to introduce Employment Security's Commissioner Cami Feek and see if you have any words or want to do any introductions.

**MS. FEEK:** Thanks, Matt. I really appreciate the opportunity. I don't have a lot of words today. I mean I have lots of words, but I think we have a great agenda, and I will just let that be the conversation for today. I appreciate the opportunity.

**MS. MARCHAND:** Hi, everyone. I'm Beth Marchand. I'm the interim director of the Leave and Care Commission. This is my first advisory in a while, so excited to be here today.

**MS. CHARLES:** Edsonya Charles, Paid Family Medical Leave Ombuds.

**MS. GORTON:** Good morning. Julia Gorton here on behalf of the Washington Hospitality Association representing employer interests.

**MS. HETRICK:** Good morning. Tammie Hetrick, president and CEO for the Washington Food Industries Association representing employer interests.

**MS. WEIST:** Good morning, Brenda Weist, vice president for Teamsters Local 117 here representing the interests of workers and also interim appointee on behalf of Maggie Humphreys, who is out on paid family leave.

**MS. GRAD:** Hi, Samantha Grad, Teamsters 117 representing employee interests.

**MS. WATKINS:** Marilyn Watkins, Economic Opportunity Institute representing employee interests.

**MR. BATTLES:** Bob Battles, Association of Washington Business here on behalf of employer interests.

**MR. BUELOW:** All right. I believe I got everyone who is here. Did I miss any advisory committee members?

**MS. GRAD:** Joe is on vacation this week. So, he will not be joining.

**MR. BATTLES:** Christine will be about 30 minutes late.

**MR. BUELOW:** Awesome. Thanks, Bob. We will look forward to her joining when she can. I sent out late last week the minutes from February and March. I'm hoping the committee had a chance to review those, and, if so, do we have any motions?

**MS. GORTON:** I'm happy to motion to approve the minutes.

**MS. WEIST:** Second.

**MR. BUELOW:** All in favor?

**MS. WEIST:** Aye.

**MS. GRAD:** Aye.

**MS. CHARLES:** Aye.

**MR. BATTLES:** Aye.

**MR. BUELOW:** Anyone not in favor? Okay. We will consider February and March minutes approved. I'm going to hand it back over to Beth and ask her to talk to you all about the advisory committee reset that we have been working on with you all.

**MS. MARCHAND:** Thank you, Matt, and I want to thank the advisory committee for giving me some feedback over the last month about how to reset our working relationship with the advisory committee and how to improve communications.

So, we have been doing a lot of work internally on improving it, taking your feedback to heart, and, hopefully, we have come up with a structure that will improve our communication, and if you advance the slide, I will kind of take you through a little bit of what we are thinking.

We are testing this out today, this new standing meeting structure, but we definitely heard from you that we need to have more consistency in terms of the topics that we talk about in the meetings. So, some of the things that we heard from you that you want to hear about every month is what is the state of the program, what is the trust fund status. So, we will be doing that every advisory committee meeting, and you will see that today.

Also, understanding the current priorities, so what are the current priorities of the division, what are we really focused on. I know you have seen probably our longer strategic plan, but what are we doing in the next, say, three months, the next month. So, we will be sharing those with you today.

Also, you know, what's going on with policy and having the workgroups, which we just started implementing again. At the beginning of our relationship with advisory, we had a lot of workgroups, and we wanted to reinstate that. So, we will be doing workgroup updates.

Finally, hearing more about communications and outreach. So, bringing in our communications team to do workgroups with advisory and having them talk to us at every meeting about what's going on in the com space. Any questions about that?

All right. So, this is -- we are going to test this out today, and I would love to hear any feedback you might have on things that are missing, things that you would like to see that you didn't get to see. Feel free to reach out to me. We will test this out, but it's an ongoing process. So, we want to make sure we get your input on the things that we are doing and that we are just tapping into the collective knowledge around how to make this program great. So, thank you for helping us do this reset, and we will go to the next slide.

So, just a little bit more detail on the workgroup structure. I know we have started to schedule these workgroups on the new legislation to get your feedback and understanding of the intent of the legislation. So, but the workgroup structure will be just short-term emerging issues. We are not going to have standing meetings. We are going to have ad hoc, oh, we need advisory to dig deep on some of these things we are wrestling with. We will be calling those. I appreciate you opening up your schedule and the calendar, and a lot of times it might be policy related, but sometimes it might be operations.

So, that's where we are at on the workgroup. Questions on this?

Okay. Next slide. So, the communications workgroup, does Nick want to talk about this? Is Nick on?

**MR. DEMERICE:** I am. I'm happy to just run through quickly. So, we pulled together a group of you. I think we will get some more sort of sustainable model or continuity over time, but we reached out to all of you to ask those of you who were interested in going a little deeper around our communications, specifically, the trust fund solvency and the legislative solutions for that.

So, we met I think there were two or three of you, maybe not everybody for the whole time, and we sort of ran through the communications plan, the differentiation between our proactive and reactive audiences, some of the materials that we were pulling together, as well as some of the talking points, which we shared with all of you, and a one-pager that we have developed. So, that will be coming to you shortly.

I think it was a really nice opportunity to go deeper with those of you who have desire to do so. We will continue to do that and figure out what the right level of activity is to bring you all in on to be able to get that valuable feedback, and we really appreciated the ability to have a conversation with you around as amplifiers of messages and connectors to key constituencies. What are the tools that you need? What are the messages that are going to resonate? What is the level of detail you need to be able to pass that understanding on? So, really looking forward to that continued partnership and seeing that as a model.

I have heard from many of you, you don't really want to get into the really deep weeds on some of this nuanced stuff, but you really want to be sure to be there as a partner and a connector, and you have valuable feedback and input to be able to give us: What makes sense, what doesn't make sense, and where can we tap into that incredible resource. So, that is the plan. This will be - I think it will come into a little bit sharper focus about, again, what level of things we will be bringing you into and with what regularity over time.

**MS. MARCHAND:** Thank you, Nick. Any other thoughts about the reset or how we are redesigning how we work together? Thank you.

We are really looking forward to the partnership and leveraging your thoughts, so we can have concerted efforts going forward. We definitely heard no surprises moving forward, and, hopefully, there won't be. There is also going to be some email communications and, as always, you can contact us. We will contact you as needed and as we are moving through implementing the new legislation, as well as other things. I will turn it back to Matt.

**MR. BUELOW:** Let's get back to the program update. I will turn it to over to the Steve Zawojsky. I hope I said that right, Steve. My apologies, if I did not, and Rebecca Grady.

**MR. ZAWOJSKY:** Thank you, Matt. My name is Steve Zawojksy. I'm the treasury manager for the PFML treasury. I have only been in the position for a couple of months, and this is my first advisory board meeting. I'm looking forward to chatting with you all.

I'm going to review a few slides here. If we could advance to the next slide. The monthly ending trust fund balance, so essentially what we are looking at here, here is the balance at the end of each month starting March of 2021 through the end of March of 2022, and a couple of points. PFML premium payments come in on a quarterly basis. So, you will see in May of 2021, August of 2021, November and February, that there is an increase in the trust fund balance in those months. That is based on those premium remittances that come every three months. The -- essentially, the benefit payments overall have been exceeding the premiums collected in this time period. And so, that's why you see a decrease in that balance.

The end of last month, we -- the trust fund did dip below one week's worth of benefit payments. Thankfully, in the last legislative session, the Legislators passed ESD 5693, which essentially provides us an assurance from OFM that we can have the PFML trust fund run up to a \$350 million deficit, and the current legislation will cover that as of June 30th of 2023. Any questions on this slide?

Okay. Advance to the next slide, please. Thank you. So, this is a slide that shows -- breaks down by quarter benefits, premiums, and operating expenses. In general, we have been seeing over the last few quarters about a \$250 million-a-quarter benefits outlay, and premiums have been ticking along, you know, between \$170 and \$190 million. Again, this is causing some of the trend in the trust fund balance to decrease.

Operating experiences have maintained fairly stable from the advent the program in 2019 through current, which I think is a positive thing as benefit payments have certainly increased. We have been able to do that with roughly the same expenditures over that time period, which to me means we are becoming more efficient with that process.

The last row at the bottom, it just shows the trust fund balance, which was also covered on that previous slide. Any questions about this slide?

**MS. GORTON:** Hey, Steve. This is Julia. Do you have a projection on what we think we might bring in on April 30th for when the quarterly payments are due?

**MR. ZAWOJSKY:** I don't off the top of my head. I can say that, given the adjustment in the premium rate as of first quarter of 2022, everything else being equal, we would expect 50 percent more premiums to come in.

Obviously, everything is not going to be equal and things will change, but we will see. That's part of the initial legislation that sort of corrects premium and benefit variances. So, this year, you know, we might expect about \$300 million to come in for that first quarter.

**MS. GORTON:** Okay.

**MR. ZAWOJSKY:** That would certainly be an increase.

**MS. GORTON:** Thank you.

**MR. ZAWOJSKY:** Any other questions? Next slide, please. This slide shows the monthly premiums remitted. Again, as these are dual on a quarterly basis, you will see upticks. When we receive them in April, July -- or when they are due in April, July, October, and January with other smaller amounts remitted either for past due amounts or other items.

We are seeing, even at the previous premium rate, we were seeing an increase, a gradual increase in premiums about 14 percent compared with the previous quarter one. So, again, with the additional premiums that are being collected, we would expect that to increase substantial. Any other questions about this slide?

**MS. WATKINS:** I did have a question. This is Marilyn Watkins. I know in August of 2021 and November of 2021, there's pretty -- you know, a larger than in other non-premium-collection months increase in the amount of premiums coming in and wonder if that is related to any kind of enforcement actions by the Department, any kind of additional communications and outreach, or if that was sort of what ended up happening just with the ebb and flow of whatever usually happens?

**MR. ZAWOJSKY:** Given that that's before my time in this role, I'm going to maybe defer to someone else. It could be a timing issue as far as when --

**MS. GRADY:** I can take that, Steve. It's actually a timing issue. It is actually when the month ends. We do expect that for this month, as well, where the month ends on a weekend. So, we will get more of the actual premium transactions. You know, the reports come in largely at the end of month, and then premium transactions when they actually hit our bank account would be more bumping to the next week or the next month.

**MS. WATKINS:** Thank you.

**MR. ZAWOJSKY:** Thank you, Rebecca. Any other questions about this slide?

Could we advance one more, please. All right. So, this chart essentially shows the benefit paid by month. From March 21st on, we are seeing certainly in this fiscal year an increase in benefits paid on a monthly basis compared to the previous year. We would expect, you know, this year, fiscal year '22, to pay out more than or close to \$1 billion worth of benefits compared to last year. I believe fiscal year '21 was \$758 million. So, the program is definitely seeing additional utilization, and that's about all I have to about this slide. Any questions about this slide?

Okay. And I think that the next slide is going to be move on to Rebecca. Thank you all.

**MS. GRADY:** Thanks, Steve. So, that was all the kind of historical to date of our cash flow. And so, now we thought we would get into projections, then offer some more detail about program utilization and those other factors that are sort of feeding into the money-in/money-out.

So, up on the screen, first the graph on the right is our near-term weekly cash flow projections. So, these are the projections of the fund balance, and you can see there are a dip and the near-term dip in April where we are expecting to be below zero for about three weeks.

We did see that happen near the end of the last week for the first time. And so, we will be expecting then at the end of this month to the first week in May, in particular, to rise back up again to about \$200 million, and then we will start to draw down again, assuming our patterns hold for premium payments going up and -- or premium payments coming in and benefits going out. Lot of the exactly how low we will go in April will depend on exact timing of when premiums are remitted this month. So, there is some uncertainty there.

Then on the left, we thought it would be useful to start providing a monthly "make sure there is no surprises with the projected premium rates" and how those are looking for next year. So, we thought we would include those in our monthly updates.

For now, there is no change from what we shared during the legislative session, but we will call out as we move forward each month, if the projections look like there will be any change to the 2023 premium rate. Any questions on the projections?

Okay. We will go to the next slide. Getting some of the input, this graph should be pretty familiar. That is applications submitted by type. So, we have been averaging around 17,000 claim applications submitted each month. In March, it was just under that, up from February, but that's kind of expected, because February is a short month. But maybe a more relevant comparison is March of last year. We are up about 19 percent in applications from March of last year.



The recent increases, so the March increase was across all claim types. There wasn't one particular claim type that sort of stood out. It's just sort of an overall increase we saw.

We go to the next slide, we turn to approval rates and payments. So, the percentage of claims approved is relatively stable. So, we are not showing that kind of month over month, because it would be a pretty boring type of graph. It has been about 83 percent approved overall in the past year.

And then in terms of kind of giving an idea of how many sorts of active claims are going on in a particular month or in a particular period, the graph there shows the monthly number of unique claims with at least one payment in a month. And so, that's sort of our ongoing deduplicated, how many claims are having approved claims in the month. And in March, it was a little over 32,000, which is about 27 percent more than March of last year. Over the past 12 months, the deduplicated number was over 177,000 with slightly more than half of those being family leave.

Go to the next slide. Turn to benefit amounts and lengths. In March, we had an average weekly benefit for new claims as far as new claim years established, the average weekly benefit amount was \$959.

The highest to date, we have been expecting an increase in the early part of 2022, because the average weekly benefit calculation or the weekly benefit calculation for customers is based in part on the statewide average annual wage, and as we talked about when we were talking about projections assumptions this past summer, that increased a good 10 percent from 2020 to 2021. So, we have been expecting that increase in the average weekly benefit amount that you can see in the graph in January.

Before January, we were averaging about \$870 to \$890 a week as the average weekly benefit amounts, and since January, it was -- well, January was \$930 and then \$940 and now \$959. So, that should sort of stabilize as the early part of January was more new claim years starting. That should sort of slowly taper off after the first few months of the year.

In terms of length of leave, length of leave is also relatively stable. So, we are not showing it month over month here. It has been for a while now about seven to eight weeks per claim, or, if thinking about the fact that some people have multiple claims within a claim year, about nine to ten weeks average that people are taking within the claim year.

Go to the next slide. I'm turning to kind of operational metrics and operational performance, a couple key things that we have been tracking and sharing with you all. One has been our phone time. So, as you know, we did this phase hiring approach this year to increase staffing to address

responsiveness to customers, and our first priority there was the phone time, and we have continued to see success on the phones.

With March, we were down to about a five-minute average queue time or hold time for customers. So, we have been continuing to see great success there.

I think it's really, you know, sort of stands out to me the comparison to last March. You can see in the bottom kind of bar there that, from last March, we have had 44 minute more longer hold times. So, we have decreased that by 44 minutes, the amount of time people are holding on the phone on average.

And then more recent waves of hiring -- we go to the next slide -- have been focused on making sure we are responsively processing benefits, getting payments to people in a timely manner. And so, we had our most recent cohort come out of training and start processing in March. And you can see the impact that they are having with the average time from when customers first submit a leave application to when their first payment is approved decreased by nearly half a week on average, which might not seem like much, but a lot of things have to get a lot faster in order for the overall average for the month to decrease by about half a week. And it's also the first meaningful change really we have seen in this processing time since you can see on the right-hand side is the comparison to last March, where it was about five weeks, and it has been about five weeks pretty consistently until this most recent month.

We are also seeing a number of really promising leading indicators. So, this is sort of a trailing indicator, because we have to wait until people are approved for payments in order to assess this, but some of the leading indicators, like the average number of benefit applications that we are processing each day, are indicating or leading us to believe we will see even more movement on this in April and May.

So, that's all I have got with other program measures and metrics. Any other questions on anything that either I have shared, or are there other things that you would like to be seeing on a monthly basis or any other thoughts or feedback on that?

**MS. GORTON:** Go ahead.

**MS. HETRICK:** I didn't quite hear what you said at the end there on the applications and what you expect upcoming.

**MS. GRADY:** Sure. So, we are seeing that the average number of applications that we are processing kind of each day has increased quite a bit. I think this was about -- 71 percent was our average increase in processing the application part of things today in March versus in February.

So, given that, I would expect that will impact then the next month time between application and first payment. So, we are hopeful that will continue to decrease.

**MS. HETRICK:** Thank you.

**MS. GORTON:** So, on the financial data, are we officially in the \$350 million allotment from OFM?

**MS. GRADY:** Go ahead, Cami.

**MS. FEEK:** I think this is little confusing. There are two pieces. So, we are not formally drawing down against the \$350 million reserve that was set aside by the Legislature, and we would not do that until we get to the end of the fiscal year, if there is a gap between and any kind of balance. There is, in the letter that I or the notes that I sent out, OFM granted us approval to basically overdraw our bank account, if that makes sense, on the trust fund with the notion that this is cash flow, and it will get replenished as these funds come in.

So, as we move towards the end of this fiscal year, we can't carry a negative balance. If we got to that situation, we draw against the 350 to formally close that gap, and that would be money used out of that reserve that is set aside, but we don't do that on this quarterly basis. We have basically sort of a line of credit to allow us to overspend the trust fund knowing that the funds are coming in.

We will be keeping an eye on this and continue to have this discussion with you every month, so you can see if there is, you know, a forward gap that is building or if this cash flow situation realigns itself sort of each quarter without a giant balance, if that makes sense, and I'm seeing three hands, so it probably makes zero sense, but I will go to Bob first, because I saw his hand and then Samantha and Marilyn.

**MS. GORTON:** Let me finish my question before you move on.

**MR. BATTLES:** Go ahead, Julia.

**MS. FEEK:** Sure, Julia, go ahead and finish your question first. I should have asked that first. How rude of me like, bye, Julia.

**MS. GORTON:** I was just trying to confirm we are officially in the drawing-from-the-line-of-credit category. That's where we are?

**MS. FEEK:** Sure. Got it. Sorry.

**MS. GORTON:** At the end of the first quarter of this year that you are getting concerned about at this point being able to make it to the end of the fiscal year. I know it's early.

**MS. FEEK:** Yeah, it is early. I'm going to see if Rebecca or Steve have a more current balance. I think we anticipated that we would be in the red last week after everything processed.

So, do you have a current number, Rebecca?

And we can talk a little bit about where our projections are at the end -- sort of at the end of this premium collection place. We have done a little bit of the math to try to figure out where we will be, and, Rebecca, if you are comfortable speaking to that, that would be great.

**MS. GRADY:** Absolutely. So, today our balance was negative \$10.5 million. So, we are definitely in that space already, and we expect that by the end of, say, the first week of May, we will be back up to that, you know, kind of almost \$200 million that you saw in that weekly projection chart. In terms of where we will be at the end the fiscal year, a lot of that really, really depends, as you know, with how much benefits continue to grow or whether they continue to level off, those sorts of things. But we sort of expect we might need some or none or depending on the optimistic-pessimistic kind of projections, we may or may not need any of that \$350 million. It's really too early to tell, but we will make sure to keep updating on that, as well.

**MS. FEEK:** I do want to amplify what Rebecca just said, and one of my questions for all you when we get through this part is whether these slides are the right slides and the right look, if you are getting the information you need.

But that will be an important part of the conversation as we move forward each month and we see the trends of what those claims are, what the actual benefit pay out, because, as you know, the amount of those pay outs can vary depending on who is claiming.

So, putting that together in a picture that I think is here and call out to specifically where we are relative to that line of credit and then sort of how that plays out with where we are with the current group of claims each month and adjusting. What we can say is we have a little bit more certainty based on the volumes that come in and the amount of pay out.

So, anyway, right now, it's hard to tell, but with each month, we will revisit this conversation and then be able to project a little bit better what those trends are as both the claim volumes and the claim amounts.

**MS. GORTON:** Thank you.

**MS. FEEK:** You're welcome. Bob.

**MR. BATTLES:** Thank you, Cami and Rebecca. My question is again about the \$350 million, and it's maybe decided in the legislative task force or the JLARC or even the actuaries, and I'm trying to remember back. But does the \$350, if you take and draw from that to be able to cover that gap, because you cannot go into the next fiscal year with that gap, is there procedures to replenish that, so we will always have something like \$350 million in there, or could it end up being drained, if the system isn't working?

Is that something we need to address in the next year for legislation? Is there anything in that process to replenish that reserve, so we don't get to the same situation where we have nothing.

**MS. FEEK:** That reserve is just for this biennium, Bob, and I believe, without having been a deep part of the conversation, that the intent of the task force is to really look at the actuarial study work and what is happening and the current data to make some decisions at a policy level about, if there is an ongoing gap, like how that is fixed, and a reserve is one thing that can be considered, but I think that part of that. In my mind, that's part of that conversation, because there isn't a mechanism in the current legislation for that to be ongoing.

**MR. BATTLES:** That's what I was thinking, and I wanted to confirm that. Thank you.

**MS. FEEK:** Yes, absolutely. Samantha?

**MS. GRAD:** Yeah. So, the slide we are looking at right now showing, you know, the average weeks from application submission to first payment, I know it's down from last year -- and that's great. Thank you -- but I just want to really point out, there is no world in which someone's rent is not due in four and a half weeks. So, we are talking about people not being able to pay their rent, because they are so delayed on this. And the way our society is set up, you are criminalized for those kinds of things, and those late fees pile up, and, like, that genuinely is the difference for a lot of people; they get into a hole that they cannot then dig out of.

So, this is why we have been hitting the point on pre-determination and trying to shrink this window as much as possible. I want to just keep hitting that point, because if you were to ask a

lot of low-wage service workers and tell them you are not going to get paid for probably four or five weeks, people who are waiting on surgeries and things like that, a lot of them would probably not do that, if they knew that was how long the window of time was going to be for them to actually get paid.

So, do we have plans to shrink that window?

How can we talk about getting that window down to a much more manageable time? Because, again, there is no way that a someone's rent is not due in a four-and-a-half-week window that they are not going to be able to pay, because they have not been getting paid during that time.

**MS. FEEK:** I don't -- Samantha, you should keep that point and bring it up. I think it would make sense for us to come back with what those specific things, next set of things that we are doing are. And related to predetermination, I will let the team jump in, if I'm off base here, but I think that is a conversation that we can have and sort of walk through what that may look like and what we are doing there, because I do think that is a quicker path than some others and is having some level of impact that we can influence by getting that sorted out.

So, I'm not as deep in the mix on, you know, where exactly we are in the timing of some of that, but I know it's a conversation that we have had, and there is a level of work that is at least started to look at that. So, I will invite the team to jump in with any other commentary, or, you know, what usually happens is much more intelligent phrasing and details about some of this than I have.

**MR. BUELOW:** Let me jump in and see if I can help. Those are all great points, Samantha, and, you know, we understand, and we want those numbers to improve.

We don't have an actual target that we are shooting for right now on this particular metric. So, I can't say this is what we are going for, but, you know, certainly, we want people to get the money as quickly as possible for lots of reasons, right?

And so, when I think about the predetermination, and we have talked a lot about that before, and, you know, this new workgroup structure, it makes me wonder if that might be something we want to talk about or this, right, like how do we set up -- what should the metric be and how do we think we could get there, which maybe predetermination could be a piece. I don't know, just thinking that new structure through.

It could be something we could dive into the details, if people are interested in, but I know that is one you all have brought forward many times and understandably so.

**MS. GRAD:** I would say that is definitely one we are interested in, and Bob, Julia, Tammie can correct me if I'm wrong, but I feel like predetermination was an area that both sides of the advisory committee were interested in seeing. So, that seems like a good topic for a workgroup and working towards a solution there.

**MS. WATKINS:** Agree.

**MR. BATTLES:** We are not opposed to the predetermination. I think any time we are looking at expanding, I think that discussion should be a workgroup, as well. Since we are talking about gaps in budgets, expansion of the program should also be part of that discussion.

**MS. FEEK:** With all this, I think that is a really good discussion to have, because in some of the conversations I have had, I think there is a path there that isn't expanding who qualifies. It's having a process to allow some of the upfront work done, and then when someone has that final -- like when you know you're going to have a surgery or you know your due date, like doing some upfront work around that without a decision, right? Like it's not a decision that says, absolutely, here is what you qualify for today, because that could change, right, like depending on the timing and the quarter and your wages and just things.

But there is a path where then when that event happens, the amount of work that you would need to do is both smaller, so that as you're like in the hospital, in the hospital for your procedure, whatever that is, you don't have a super laborious process, but it also gets that final piece of information. So, then it can just quickly process, and, you know, that I think conceptually I think there is a great conversation to be had there.

There are some alignments in how we would need to look at the law and some things, but I don't think there is anything that has to totally change for us to be able to figure out how to do that. There is just some I think more technical pieces and even language around what we say about that initial pre-filing, because it's not guaranteed, right, because there are things that could impact it at the time and point at which that actually occurs. But we could have language that says, based on today, this is what it looks like, your actual determination and qualification happens at the point of, you know, this occurring.

Anyway, we don't need to design today, but I think there is a really good conversation to be had, and I want to make it clear, Bob, like I don't think we are planning on expanding any of the benefits or who gets benefits. I think it's more about process about how that works when you have a known event.

**MR. BATTLES:** Cami, I wasn't thinking that particular issue was about expansion.

**MS. FEEK:** Okay.

**MR. BATTLES:** I'm just talking in general when we are looking at this thing.

**MS. FEEK:** Yes.

**MR. BATTLES:** When we are talking workgroups, I think that is an important workgroup, and I think whenever we have any workgroups, we should be considering those kind of things as part of workgroup, too. As opposed to here is the legislation, now tell us why it is not going to fit into the plan, let's talk about things before they go forward. That is totally separate, two different issues.

**MS. FEEK:** Absolutely. Thank you. Sorry I convoluted them and congregated them in my mind, and I fully get it. I think any expansion of benefits is always a great conversation to understand all the impacts, and I can see why you would want to make sure that is clear. All right. Marilyn?

**MS. WATKINS:** Some of my questions have already been answered. So, thank you for that. But I do want to also kind of reiterate and reinforce that this is way too long. And, yes, absolutely, let's have the workgroup and really talk through multiple ways to really get this number down. But I would also like to ask, because it sounded like there are additional -- are there additional teams of people coming on board -- of staff coming on are board to deal with processing and to -- where these numbers would come down because of that, (a), and (b) are there also additional technology changes? I understand there are changes coming to the application and claims forms, as well. Are those continuing sort of improvements to the process, the technology? Is that going to also speed these up?

And I think we absolutely need a goal, not just let's get it down a little bit more another point or two, another day. A day is good, but two weeks is better to get -- reduce these numbers by. So, I guess --

**MS. FEEK:** Yes, yes, to all of the above. I think I will first call on John to talk about the operations of staffing, and then our team is doing some really great customer experience impact journey mapping and then making some improvements in the actual application that I think will reduce errors and get people to submit complete packages more quickly, and Allison can talk about that next after John talks about staffing.

**MR. MATTES:** Thank you, Cami. So, on your question about where we are at with hiring and training, we have completed most of our hiring for our customer care teams. I still have a few that are in various stages of training. There is a ramp-up period in terms of, once we have on-boarded



staff, we have what we call the Customer Care Academy. So, they do some foundational kind of training for that. That is about a month, and then there is a period of additional training, which is about a month after that, where they are really working to get familiar with what does this look like. They are going through different work checks and some of those things to make sure they are really up to speed before they are kind of released to be in production and really assisting customers.

Most of the work we have done is hiring over the September 1st report. Most of that staff has either completed all of that or is just finishing that, and as Rebecca indicated, we are seeing some really good processing. We saw a significant increase in March, and we are trending significantly up in April. So, we do expect these numbers will continue to improve as we move forward.

**MS. FEEK:** I think one of the things, just to amplify something John said, that we see across all of our programs where that work with the customer happens is there is that training and making sure, for sure, that people are grounded and have the right skills. Then, as they get that experience, their pace picks up, too. So, that next final group will come in, but as a team and collectively that speed will also improve as people get more experienced in the work.

So, but that piece alone, I just want to say is, you know, just a piece. There is a whole puzzle here. So, I will kick it over to Allison to share a little bit about the technical improvements we are making and have in the works for the customer experience that will have a positive impact, as well.

**MS. ELDRIDGE:** Thank you. So, we do have several changes coming to customer experience for both the applications and the weekly claims process, and these will be going live in June. The changes to the application, we looked at kind of a whole host of reasons that people were falling into fact-finding or ended up for redetermination, and we looked at ways we could improve the application to get the right information the first time and hopefully not have people kind of being held up in those processes.

So, we are sort of making the way that someone asks for leave to be more situationally based than right now someone requests medical leave or family leave, essentially, and we are flipping it a little bit to ask them to answer questions that are a little bit more about their circumstance. So, we are driving them to sort of the right pathway from the beginning.

And then on the weekly claims, we are making changes to create dynamic, conditional, weekly claim questions. So, someone doesn't need to answer questions that aren't relevant to their circumstances, and we hope that -- the same sort of idea, we looked at the data that we have about where customers were getting kind of stuck in the weekly claims process and what are the things that are impacting their ability to accurately respond to the questions in the weekly claim,

and then we sorted them out into a flow that allows them to not have to answer questions that are not relevant to their circumstance, because, you know, for customers, it's going -- it's very confusing to answer a question about missing eight consecutive hours of work, if you didn't work at all. And if you have a shift job and you're not on the schedule, you don't necessarily consider yourself to have missed work. And so, we are just changing kind of the flow of those questions and the wording of those questions to be more situationally appropriate for customers.

**MS. FEEK:** That is also something we could come back next month and show you. I think, you know, in a short kind of presentation, I think that is a really important example of using the data that we have to understand where those points of failure are for our customers, because our system isn't clear and doesn't put -- have language in context of things that they would actually understand; that we are using language that is in the law or that makes sense, if you're on our side of the equation, but aren't the terms and the way that people in their everyday life really experience their work or talk about what's going on.

So, I'm really excited about the work that Allison has done to both identify those places and then translate those into what is a much simpler and more straightforward series of questions that would make sense to someone engaging with the system to accomplish filing for their benefits. So, I think that's -- that will be I think a huge improvement overall and get us a good outcome. So, any questions for Allison before we kick it over to Brenda?

All right. Hearing none, Brenda.

**MS. WEIST:** I'm not trying to gang up on people, because there has been a lot of really good information on this topic. I think what the thing I would really like to put out there to the team and process folks and system folks and all that is that we need to find a way to get folks to two weeks from the point that they apply until they can get their claim.

We shouldn't have to come up with that as a goal. That should just be the goal because that is when people are expecting to get paid. And whatever it takes on the system end to work backwards from how do we get to two weeks, you need to find your way to expeditiously implement those things, so that workers can have certainty around getting their leave, and, obviously, predetermination et cetera.

But the unemployment insurance program is a large program. It has a waiting week. If people do their things correctly, they have an expectation they are going to get paid when they collect unemployment, and they found a way to make that happen, except in the case of adjudication. So, we need to find a way to replicate that on this side of the equation.

I don't know how to do that, but I know people who are for ESD can figure that out, and I would like to see what that looks like at an upcoming workgroup or advisory committee meeting that says, these are the inputs that we need in order to get to two weeks, and it means all of these things, and that's how we are going to get there, and that's when we are going to get there.

**MS. FEEK:** I hear you and appreciate that, and we can do either or both. I think this conversation has been great, and we need to move from conversation to here is the plan, and we can definitely do that. I am -- I don't disagree one bit with the two-week measure, Brenda.

I think it would also be a helpful conversation in the way that you described it to both make sure that we have the population, without knowing what is behind this data, personally, speaking for myself, making sure we know that we have the population that does need some level of adjudication versus the population that has the things, and then what are the blockers.

I mean I think that's what Allison and the team has been looking at is what are the blockers that are preventing people to smoothly coming in to be approved and just like, yep, it's all there, this is the right path, they applied for the right leave, they have the right hours, like this is ready to roll.

So, I think that is a deeper conversation about what are the things we already learned that sort have of been that walk back you have talked about that will contribute, what are the things we still know we need to do but we have a plan for and we think will have this impact and get your input around that decision around how some of that will work.

And I think that doing that in a workgroup just allows just a deeper conversation and to really home in on this particular dimension of the measure and this part of the process. So, I appreciate that, and it's not piling on or -- I -- I can see why multiple perspectives reiterating and underscoring how important this piece is. It's important.

**MS. WEIST:** Also, kudos on getting wait times down. That is not missed in terms of the data points. Anybody can expect some amount of wait time when they are calling into a state agency, depending on the day, et cetera. So, getting that down is really significant and helpful for folks, particularly given people that need to call during business hours may only have a 10 or a 15-minute break or a 30-minute lunch to call in. So, having that below five minutes is a great thing for working people.

**MS. FEEK:** Thank you for calling that out, Brenda. I appreciate what the team has done on that front, and we just need to get laser focused on this other number, as well, and I think we got the team to do it. So, we will get that set up and come back to you with some other conversation.

Edsonya?

**MS. CHARLES:** Thanks. So, I would like to comment on the reduction on the wait times, as well. It has been weeks since the Ombuds Office had a complaint about wait times. So, I think this is significant, because there was a time where every complaint had a component of frustration with not being able to get through or phone drops.

I do have a question for Allison about the dynamic weekly claims. Is there going to be a process or some explanation on how people can correct their weekly claims as part of that revamp?

**MS. ELDRIDGE:** Yes. Thanks, Edsonya. Yes, there will be, and we are working on a pretty substantial communications plan, an effort around that for customers who are mid claim, customers who are returning and will see a weekly claim be different than it was in the past, and we -- I will have to check the exact kind of specifications for the technical work. Some of it will come up slightly later than the bulk of it, but I can follow up with you on that.

**MS. CHARLES:** Thank you. And then, you know, in the summer of 2020, way back ancient history now, there was the plan for the two-week goal, and the Department did get the processing time down to two weeks, and there was a lot of conversation about it.

But then it was explained that two-week goal was not a sustained two-week effort. So, I just -- in our conversation about sort of goals for processing, I think we should be clear about everybody's expectation of what the duration is or if that is a permanent thing.

**MR. BUELOW:** Edsonya, just to clarify, too, and what it means, right? So, target two weeks when we did that was not this metric. It was not the first payment metric, right? It was two weeks from the time someone got their application in to us approving that application, and, you know, I understand the two weeks that Brenda is saying, as well, and don't disagree, but, yeah, it's something we will have to work through. We can get there, hopefully.

**MS. FEEK:** Yeah, and I mean John can correct me, if I'm wrong, but I think we are still in that two-week application processing window or under, like, or better. So, that is still happening, but it's, you know, between that and payment, unless I'm off. So, figuring out what those other pieces of the equation are in there that are impacting those metrics and outcomes. So, I know at least this month we are in that two-week window.

**MS. CHARLES:** I do agree. The Department is back to that for this, but I think it fluctuates.

**MS. FEEK:** Right.

**MS. CHARLES:** Good is good. There is it definitely a downward trend.

**MS. FEEK:** And I think I really appreciate the point, Edsonya, how do we stay there, and how do we fix or potentially impact things that have an effect on that timeline, at least reduce the risk or mitigate what those things are.

I think that is a great next conversation. I think we can come back with better information about some of the things that are in the works that we think will have an impact, what kind of impact we anticipate that to have, and then what it would take to continue to close that gap. So, we will frame that up and come back with that.

I do think it's a good workgroup conversation, because we can do a deep dive in some of the things that -- that and bring more visibility at a more granular level detail of some of those things that we either are doing or would like to do and get your input and feedback on it.

All right. Anything else before we move off this slide and on to the next thing? It's been a great conversation. I really appreciate it.

**MR. BUELOW:** Awesome.

**MS. FEEK:** Hearing none, it's back to Buelow.

**MR. BUELOW:** Thanks, Cami. If we could advance slides, I'm going to talk about what our priorities are in the moment. So, these are the top three things we are focused on right now.

Hopefully, these aren't a surprise to anyone, and, hopefully, you agree they are the right things. So, if we could move forward one slide. We are implementing the legislative changes that were passed in this session, so implementing 5649 doing all that requires to the technology, policy, operation, communications.

Same things with 2076 or transportation network company drivers. There's less technical work that needs to be done for that particular bill. We are implementing the changes to the waiting week concurrently with the legislation doing the technical, operational, and communications there. And then I think the other priority is as important to point out, which is a lot of what we just talked about, frankly, ties into this continuous improvement to the customer experience and our processing times.

So, we want you to know that is a continued priority of ours is not just to get new stuff out but also to continue to not just keep the lights on but make it better, as well. So, those are the three, the top three things, we are focusing on today. Those are not the only three things we are focusing on today.

So, I will dive in a little bit more into the legislation, specifically about what we are doing and where we are. But before I do that, are there any questions on these priorities or comments? Cool. You saved all your questions for Cami. I like it.

Can we advance the slide, please? So, for Senate Bill 5649, this slide I will talk about the near-term implementation, and next slide I will talk about some of the long-term implementation we are doing. So, we are implementing the compassion leave, which is the part of the law that allows someone who loses their child to receive seven weeks of benefits or excuse me -- seven days of benefits, not weeks; continue to receive those benefits; postnatal medical leave, which has an assumption in the law that the first six weeks following birth for the parent who gives birth should be medical leave. We are implementing that, as well, and working through all of that.

We are going to publish the voluntary plan employer list once the bill is technically effective. That will be effective, and we will get it out there.

Data collection for COVID-related leave, so we are going to have that implemented shortly, as well. So, we will be able to collect that data as required, and then we are working on or will be working on -- I shouldn't say we are, because we are not quite yet -- but we will start working on the sunset of the collective bargaining provision. It doesn't take effect until the end of 2023, but we know there is a lot of communication work and readiness work that needs to happen. So, we are considering that one more near-term, because we will need to be picking that up this year.

If with could go forward one more slide for me. So, the future planning, which is not far off to be fair. So, Office of Financial Management, under the law, by October, they will have to report with recommendations. So, we will support them in that. We will be standing up the Office of Actuarial Services within the Employment Security Department. That begins January 1st of 2023 with quarterly reports to you all beginning in October of next year and annual reports to the Legislature.

Premium and Solvency Legislative Task Force, which is the one Bob talked about already, one of the ones Bob talked about, that is convened by the Legislature to provide recommendations, and the JLARC report and analysis will be done, as well. So, that's what we have that we are working on in upcoming on 5649. Any questions on that before I move on?

**MS. FEEK:** I don't have a question, but I can provide an update on the OFM piece. I know they have initiated the process to hire the actuary that is going to help with that work. So, I know that is underway, and that we have had some very small conversations about the convening of that legislative task force, given it is the responsibility of the Legislature but just sort of raising our hand and checking in to see what that approach might be. And I don't have any deep information to share, but just wanted you to know that, even the things that aren't necessarily ESD's to initiate or lead, we are checking in on and making sure that they are moving forward in a way that will be successful. So, I wanted to share that.

**MR. BUELOW:** Marilyn?

**MS. WATKINS:** Yes, thanks, and this may be jumping ahead in the agenda. So, if it is, we can just postpone answering this until that part of the agenda.

I'm curious about the proactive communication plan around the policy changes that are happening with 5649 and, particularly, any targeted outreach to, say, medical provider or other people, who may be directly involved in the birthing process and might need to be -- have that information really handy and well done.

So, like I said, this may be coming up later, but if it's not, then I wonder what the plan is, and if there is not a plan, it feels like there should be one.

**MR. BUELOW:** Absolutely. And it is not on the agenda. So, let's answer that now. Nick, do you want to take that or would you like me to? Hi, Emily.

**MS. PERSKY:** I can take this one if it's helpful. So, we are working on a communication plan right now, and it's going to be comprehensive covering all of these changes. So, it's not going to be by bill. It's going to be by change.

Looking cumulatively at all of the things that are going to be happening over the next six months or so, especially in June, and we met with the program leader yesterday to get some questions answered, and we are going to be moving forward on kind of adding the details to that.

It's something we can certainly talk about in an -- I think we talked about pulling together maybe an ad hoc communication workgroup, and we would be a happy to talk more about it there.

We can also share the high points, the highlights at the next advisory committee meeting, which I think that's going to be a standing agenda item and happy to go into greater detail in a couple weeks with a workgroup.

**MS. FEEK:** Thanks, Emily. So, I would be open to how you all feel, but that seems like a great topic to actually come together around and do a little bit more of a deep dive once we have that visual with the parts and pieces of that collective communication plan.

And I do want to amplify and I guess share an appreciation for that approach of like holistically looking at what the changes are, because there is cross impact on many of these things and thinking about it holistically on how we are going to come out and communicate and which pieces with which audiences and why is I think is going to be an important way to look at it.

But I do think this is a place where I suspect we definitely can -- we plan to come every month and share those with you. But if you have a deep interest in a conversation and diving in on some of that, that seems like a great place to me to have just that subgroup come together, anybody that is interested in that conversation, and getting a little deeper and then bringing the results of that conversation forward in the update that happens each month around what our coms are for the month. And that will be a standing agenda item of that forward looking like here's what's coming; here is what is planned.

**MS. WATKINS:** Just to follow up, I do appreciate that holistic approach to communications, but particularly because that -- as we have expressed multiple times, it seems to many of us that there has been actually some miscommunication by ESD around medical leave following childbirth in the past that has led to lots of misunderstanding about that, and so that there is a need to not only educate about this new policy but kind of you're not starting from a neutral place on this communication. We are starting from a bad place on this communication.

So, I feel like there really does need to be some -- and I think several of us would be happy to participate in a workgroup to really think through what the best approach is, what are the messages, who our targeted audience is to reach out to really proactively and not just assume that whatever goes out generally is going to get to the right people who need to have this information.

**MS. FEEK:** Absolutely. We will get that put together. That is a great perspective, Marilyn, and we will make sure that we do that, so we are not missing an opportunity to get people aligned on sort of the base policy or foundation, as well as any changes. So, yeah. We will get that set up.

**MR. BUELOW:** Any other questions about 5649?

Let's advance slides, please. They are also working to implement House Bill 2066, which is the transportation network company driver bill, and they are -- explicitly excludes drivers from the



definition of "employees" for purposes of paid leave meaning that they are treated as independent contractors, who may elect coverage.

The bill is effective in June, and we will have it implemented by then. We are doing changes to our elective coverage and benefit application policies and processes. We are updating communications for the drivers and also the companies and what their responsibilities are, and we are updating our standard operating procedures and making sure that our staff are trained in how to handle these claims as they come through. So, we are prepared. I believe we will be completely prepared when that takes effect. Any questions on the implementation of 2066?  
Brenda?

**MS. WEIST:** Yeah, also just curious, there is a task force that is a portion of this bill that is looking at this, and there is also a -- I'm sure there is a communication piece and a premium calculation piece. I'm kind of looking at Cami on my screen. It was big bill, but this seems like maybe we are missing some of the -- anyway, help me, Cami.

**MS. FEEK:** Sure. Some of the other responsibilities are not directly on the Paid Family and Medical Leave program, which is this advisory committee. So, the agency has some other higher-level pieces that are across other programs. So, we are working on that, as well, and there will be hopefully some communication around that soon.

We are doing some of the leg work with some stakeholders right now to figure out that -- that task force and, you know, that study and that work, that body of work right now.

So, we will -- we will totally be back in touch with that, but the Paid Family and Medical Leave program just didn't include it in their impact or portion to this advisory committee with regards to that.

**MS. WEIST:** I think that makes sense, Cami. **MS. FEEK:** We are not ignoring them.

**MS. WEIST:** No. I think my question, statement -- I don't know what to call it. I think it is interesting the way we are calling out the elective coverage on the slide, because I think that, although maybe technically speaking they were covered for sure based on other determinations previously, that drivers did not necessarily know that to be the case.

And so, communicating to that set of workers about the elective coverage and what it means in terms of the platform paying their premium needs to get built into the work plan, because then I think you will see people opting to elect for the coverage. They didn't do it previously, because they didn't know they could I think is where I'm at.

**MS. FEEK:** Thanks for that clarification. That is entirely different than what I heard, which does not mean that is not what you said the first time. I appreciate that.

So, I think that's another great take away just for our communication and for the team to think about, given that what do we want to say about this, and I'm seeing a thumbs up from Emily Persky, which tells me she heard you loud and clear, Brenda.

**MS. PERSKY:** Yeah, I love that. Thank you. That's great.

**MS. WEIST:** I don't think we will get any push back from the platforms on this. I think they want drivers to be able to have access to this safety net. So, I'm happy to participate in offline conversations about that and with them and about how to communicate effectively to this group of folks. So, just put a marker on that one, highlight it, flag it, pin it, whatever.

**MR. BATTLES:** We definitely want to be involved in it, too. I know that the hospitality does, too. There is a lot of discussions to go into this, because one of the reasons this was put together as a task force as opposed to a main coverage is because we were going in crisis for this. So, it's critical that we make sure the funding is there. So, yeah, we want to be engaged in this, as well, and I know I have several folks on the business side that want to be engaged, so as we move forward with putting together these workgroups.

**MS. GRAD:** Emily, just to underscore, Brenda and I are super-duper available to have any conversations around this communications stuff. It's a sensitive one to the point that most drivers did not consider themselves covered under this benefit before. So, communicating that it changed will probably create a level of panic that I don't think is anyone's goal. So, we should just work together to make sure that is not what we unintentionally do.

**MS. PERSKY:** I really appreciate it. That will be great.

**MR. BUELOW:** So, Nick and Emily, I don't want to put you on the spot, but to put you on the spot, I have heard two requests for communications workgroups on these slides, and I don't know if it makes sense, if you all want to do like one workgroup around the legislation and whether it's the same participants, or whether we want to do separate workgroups for the two different bills. I just kind of want to throw that out and have that conversation, so we now how to follow up.

**MS. PERSKY:** I think sliding it is good, and if it's all right, I think I would like to kind of huddle with the team and think about the best way to get you altogether. I want to make sure we use

everyone's time respectfully. So, I would like to think about it a little bit, if that's okay, but we will get back to you within the next few days in terms of how we are going to approach this, I think.

**MR. BATTLES:** I would think dual workgroups.

Communication is different on these two bills, a different approach on this one. You need to take into account that, while it's always nice to try to do one group and it may be the same people, the topic is completely different.

**MS. PERSKY:** That was one of the things I was thinking about, so just want to, yeah, make sure that we are respecting everyone's time. Maybe it's two shorter meetings or one longer one. We will think about it. I really appreciate that feedback.

**MS. WEIST:** Also, just to underline what I think I heard Bob's concern about fiscal piece, you know, having spent considerable amount of time working on this legislation last session, that the key take way from those sessions with the platform companies was them paying premiums. It is not an expansion of the program. It is them paying their freight for people who are covered by the process.

You and I are in agreement, Bob, is what I'm saying. So, you can write that in your calendar, Brenda said in a meeting we agree, and just know we are really focused on sort of this -- I understand business broader participation -- we are really looking at a red circled group of folks in this very particular driving profession, so just to clarify having spent hours of my life.

**MR. BATTLES:** And I know there has been a commitment to have the payment made, because one of the reasons we -- when they brought it up, the statute had been written -- I should say the legislation had been written where they didn't put in the funding, even though they intended to put the funding in, even though the coverage was there.

So, that is why there is the requirement for this, but I do also think any time you expand a program to access to folks, no matter whether they are paying for it or not, it does affect the overall program. So, that's why I think we need to make sure we have these conversations. That's why it's important any time we add somebody in, even if it's an increased people paying into it, it still expands the program and the stress on it from ESD's perspective of more people making claims. So, we need to make sure all that is there, but you and I are on the same page on all this.

**MR. BUELOW:** Do we have any other questions or comments around our legislation implementation?

Okay. With that, if we could advance slides, I'm going to hand it back over to Rebecca Grady.

**MS. GRADY:** Thanks, Matt. So, we have a few upcoming reports. So, we wanted to slide them for your awareness and towards the interest again of no surprises. If we go to the next slide, none of these interest new but they are things that are coming up from past bills or past legislation.

The first one is the expanded "family member" definition from 5097 last year. So, expanded eligibility to chosen family, and our first report on that is due in June, and it covers two main things. One is how many people were using the leave with the expanded definition in the past 12 months and the effects, if any, on the trust fund. And this is one of the reports that includes advisory member comments, written comments, included at the end of the actual report, itself.

So, just flagging for your awareness that we will probably be reaching out in May with a drafted report and that request.

The next one is a one that was from the original paid leave law, and that was a report they are directed to do in the third year of the program, which we are now in, on voluntarily plan fees and costs.

And this one doesn't have a really specific exact date deadline, but we are targeting June this year to coincide and be available then for the legislative session and the budget cycle and whatnot coming up. And this one is we are directed to do some analysis on our operating cost to administer voluntarily plans.

So, what does it take to review initial applications, use a re-review of so many years to support employers when they call us up with questions or would like to understand what we would pay as a state plan for a particular employee, so they can make sure that they are paying at least that minimum benefit, and also our projection for this coming year of what those operating costs would be. And then the other component, as well as our cost, is how much in fees we have collected thus far in those voluntarily plan application fees.

The third one was also from 5097, and this one is we -- was a collaboration with you all on trying to figure out a way that we could sort of assess job protection in some way, and we are thinking about this, as we had talked about quite a while ago, as looking at a first glance with our wage reports with some employment continuity, so how many people are going back to the same employer after leave and stuff like that.

So, we had sort of deferred this for a while because of the impact of the COVID on employment where, if we had done any analysis of 2020 data, we really would not have been able to make any

sort of substantive conclusions because of the impact that COVID had on employment rates being so high.

So, this is kind of a we haven't forgotten.

We are doing some work to start thinking more about this, and one of our team members has been looking at existing research on employment continuity and putting together some ideas for methodology to study this, and we will circulate that for your feedback in the coming months.

And we are also consulting with some other researchers. We have established relationships with other researchers in some state programs, as well as academic researchers, that we are get some thoughts on other creative ideas for how to potentially assess impact of job protection or look at employment continuity.

Any questions on those or thoughts?

**MR. BUELOW:** All right. Thanks, Rebecca. All right, if we could advance slides, that's the end of our presentation today. So, I wanted to talk through for the next meeting, which is currently scheduled May 19th, some ideas that I heard I have been taking some notes throughout this meeting. I heard that we would want to show the changes that we are making to the application and weekly claims that we believe will have a great impact on our customers. So, we can do that. I think there was a request for I will call it three workgroups. I don't know what the right number is yet, but three distinct topics that need to be discussed in workgroups: Reducing the timing from the time from application to the first payment and having a workgroup around how we are can possibly come up with some solutions around that, and the communications workgroup around 5649 and 2076.

So, what I'm thinking about on workgroups is why don't I -- we will put our heads together as a team, and I will get a communication out to all of you on the advisory committee this week asking for who might want to participate in those and when we can have those sorts of things. I just want to, put some thought into how we form those and everything. So, hopefully that works for everyone, and then are those workgroups, are those all things we want to try get schedule between now and May 19th before the next advisory committee. It sounds like there is urgency to all of them. I just want to confirm that.

**MS. FEEK:** I would say there is, Matt, and also once we lay that all out, we will have to see just scheduling-wise and participation-wise if people are able to participate in everything they want to do, depending on advisory committee member participation and availability and same with our team. So, I would say yes, and when we line that out, we will have to see how people's availability

stacks up just so that we have the right people that want to participate in the room and can find the time for that.

So, I will -- we will do everything we can on our side, but I also know that advisory committee members probably have calendars similar to mine, which -- and if someone wanted to participate in all of them, it might be a challenge, so...

**MR. BUELOW:** Absolutely. Thanks, Cami. Are there any other -- any workgroups, of course, that we are able to convene prior to the next meeting, we will do a report out at the meeting of what happened, and we will go our standard agenda that we are talked through today, because I heard people like the proposed standard agenda.

Are there any other agenda items that you would like us to bring next month? Okay. Before I move on to open comment, which we have plenty of time for and I'm excited about, I just wanted to ask if there is any further thoughts or questions from any committee members?

Okay. With that, let's advance slides, and we will move to open comment. If you have a comment, please raise your hand, if you're on the computer. If you're on by phone, just try to unmute and jump in when you can. We won't know you're trying to. If you want to use chat, feel free to use chat to make your comment or say, "I have a comment." We can call on you, as well.

**MR. BUELOW:** With that, any comments?

Okay. With that, I think we are ready to adjourn. Thank you so much for attending the advisory committee meeting today. We had I think a really good -- lots of good conversation and lots of good paths forward. So, thank you so much as always for your partnership and support. Have a great rest of the day.