

<b>Location</b>	Zoom
<b>Advisory Committee Members</b>	Director, Leave and Care: Justin DeFour Paid Family & Medical Leave Act Ombuds: Edsonya Charles Employer’s Interests Representative: Bob Battles Employer’s Interests Representative: Christine Brewer Employer’s Interests Representative: Julia Gorton Employee’s Interests Representative: Samantha Grad Employer’s Interests Representative: Tammie Hetrick Employee’s Interests Representative: Maggie Humphreys Employee’s Interests Representative: Joe Kendo Employee’s Interests Representative: Gabriela Quintana
<b>Employment Security Department Staff</b>	ESD Commissioner: Cami Feek Deputy Director, Leave and Care: Matt Buelow Chief Financial Officer, ESD: Danielle Cruver Public Affairs Director, ESD: Clare DeLong Government Relations Director, ESD: Caitlyn Jekel Leave and Care Treasury Manager: Steve Zawojksy Operations Manager, Leave and Care: John Mattes Research & Data Manager, Leave and Care: Rebecca Grady ESD Managing Actuary: Eve Sheng Economic Analyst 3, Leave and Care: Brian Kennedy Legislative Coordinator, Leave and Care: Roberta Kowald Transformation Manager, Leave and Care: Alison Eldridge
<b>Notes by</b>	Zoya Spencer, Court Reporter
<b>Agenda</b>	Introductions Program & Financial update Approve February Minutes Current Priorities Legislative Session Check-In Workgroup Updates April Meeting Topics Open Comment Adjourn

**MR. BUELOW:** Edsonya, you're off camera -- or on camera, excuse me. Would you like to start the round of introductions?

**Introductions** – Matt Buelow and Advisory Committee Members

**MR. BUELOW:** It looks like that's -- looking at it, that's who I see from the committee. Did I miss anyone? I know Julia is not able to join us today, but I don't know about others. Does anyone know?

All right, so let's go ahead and move forward. Obviously I went out of order and did introductions already. So this is our agenda for today, it looks like it usually does. We'll give our normal updates. It's still written down here as current priority but we're really going into the current statement of the program and where we are so that will be a little bit different than usual. And, you know, we're going to have our legislative session check-in, our open comment period for anyone from the public who wants to tell us anything. If we can advance slides please.

So during the meeting, please only advisory committee and presenters speak and then we will open up for open comment period at the end if anyone would like to say anything. And the next slide is introductions, which we already did so we'll move to the next one.

We have four -- so if I can count today, we have four voting members of the committee here which is not a quorum so we probably should not look to approve the minutes. Does that sound right to everybody? Am I understanding anyone who is here? Okay. So we'll just come back to that if others are able to show up.

And with that, let's start with our program update. The slides are in a little bit different order this month, so we'll be hearing from Brian Kennedy first. Brian, you're up.

**MR. KENNEDY:** So we decided to update this, so showing you the input and how those impact the accounts and those results on the account will be shown after this. So we're going to jump right into applications submitted. And as you can see with February here we did see bit of a decline compared to January which kind of makes sense, January was kind of our record setting, month that we saw, and, you know, these delayed applications might have been due in January, so January was abnormally large, and just generally February is a shorter month. And so, yes, so it's kind of a shorter month, that's to be expected. But we still did see about 19,000 applications which again is about 13 percent more -- or 13 percent less than last month and about 20 percent more than February of last year. And again we're still seeing that continued shift towards the medical where about 56 percent of our applications were medical and 44 percent family, so it's kind of staying right within that trend we've been seeing, and then our three month rolling average has been seeing about 20,000 claim applications a month, so nothing there, just kind of a similar story as we've been seeing. We can jump to the next slide.

So here we have the approval rates and paid monthly claims. As you can see, it's a similar story that we've had in the past where we're at about 84 percent approval rate. And then, again, you're still seeing that slightly higher medical claims than family paid claims in the last month which is sitting around

51 percent medical and about 49 percent family. We're showing this because that's closer to what is used when we calculate the family medical split, not exactly the same but it's pretty close and gives you an idea where we're falling right now.

And then in February we saw total unique paid claims at about 35,740, which is about 27 percent more than February of last year. As you can see, we're steadily increasing still as we've been kind of seeing throughout this whole time period. February did see that a little dip, but generally steadily trending onward is the main story. We'll jump to the next one here.

As far as weekly benefit amounts, January-February we saw an average weekly benefits of about \$1,007, which is about 8 percent higher than what we saw January-February of last year, which was 929, and we just kind of wanted to note here as our most recent date February is a little bit higher. It takes a while for this data to mature, so January is a little more reflective of closer to what we're expect our benefits to be moving forward. As you may remember from previous iterations of this slide, it does jump quite a bit in January when those new benefits kick in, but then it kind of stabilizes throughout the rest of the year. So we're thinking January will be closer to that as opposed to what we're seeing in February but generally right around that range. And then we can jump to the next slide.

So here we've broken things out a little more. Last meeting you all were interested in seeing claims broken -- or lengths of leave broken out by claims as well as what it looks like on the customer level. So right now we're slowing you length of leave in a finer detail based on the claim. And like I said, more of you are interested in more like an individual's experience, this is really relevant to projections, it's the underlying unit when we're looking at projections, it really determines how many applications we'll be seeing, so our workload, our FTEs, are all based around claims so that's why we're kind of why we're starting here. And as you can see on the claim level overall 2022 compared to 2021, we dropped ever so slightly in the weeks of leave. As well as you can see this family medical changed, they both changed minorly. But kind of the main story here if you look at this friend line over time at a monthly basis, everything and staying pretty stable. We did see some like jumps here and there, but generally it's kind of stabilizing at around that 7.5, 7.4 mark in that range. So that's kind of the take home here is it's kind of stabilizing from what we've seen in recent months.

And if we want to jump to the next slide, we'll be looking at it at the claim year or kind of the customer level experience. And we have shown it by looking at a variety of different leave combinations so if you want to dive in and look at the individual types of leave and how people are using the main combinations, but it's kind of a little bit contradictory to what we're seeing on the claim level. We did see a slight uptick in the customer level or the claim year lengths of leave by .2 weeks which is quite small, and we also show it at a monthly friend level as well. And if you

look at this trend, it is also really stable. So we do see some bumps here and there and on the overall it does look like it increased a little bit. It's generally staying in the 9.4 to 9.7 weeks of leave.

And one thing to note about this is it's kind of hard to see what's happening moving forward. Lengths of leave inherently, when we're looking at the customer level experience, is once their claim year has ended. So if you're looking at our most recent data point here, February of this year, these are claims that started February of last year, so it's kind of a look back over time of where they would be. So expected volatility with this one is kind of the expectation here. So like in 2021, if you started -- or your claim year ended in September, you're incorporating all of the stuff that happened in the early implement days of COVID. So there's a lot of moving parts in that which may explain some of the contradiction we're seeing between claim and claim year, but again they're really minor and relatively small, and things are staying quite stable. So that's kind of the write home there of what's happening at the customer level. And because these look back, it's still a little too early to see what's happening with those changes in claims type with the post-natal medical changes that happened in June, so we can't really assess that quite yet. We can jump to the next slide here.

And then just one plug here. A lot of this data that if you want to look at it at an annualized basis, we do have some public dashboards. So we have it broken out at this claim level and also broken out at the customer level, and you can see different things like county differences, processing times, applications submitted, all sorts of different demographic information, wage, the employer size of the customer.

So there's the link there, there's a lot of data in that, and a lot of it was pulled from that dashboard that you just saw. So if you want to dive deeper into it, this is your outlet to get there. And then we can jump to the next slide.

And then the last bit I'll talk about is fiscal projections. So as you can see, we're in a current deficit position, I think we're just shy of maybe 60 million at this point. We went into deficit on March 7th, and it's expected to last until the end of April when get those new collections coming in. And we're expecting our maximum negative balance to be somewhere between 120 to 140 million in the red. And then once we get that collection starting in the end of April, we'll start to be positive again. And our next deficit we're expecting to begin in June. And one note is that we do expect that we will have a negative balance at the end of the biennium, so we will be tapping into that money at that point. But that's kind of generally where we're at. It is a little early to tell exactly how much that negative balance will be at the end of the biennium, there's still a lot of things that we need to make some adjustments for. ERSC just put out some wage projections which revise slightly what's happening in Q1 of this year and Q2 of this year, so that can alter things this year moving forward and alternately what way we'll be in the hole at -- during the end of the biennium.

So from there, I will pass it off to Steve.

**MR. ZAWOJSKY:** Great. Thank you, Brian. All right. We'll start out with the monthly benefits paid. February, we are at 102.2 million, which was 13 percent lower than last month but 30 percent higher than February of 2022. This is primarily a result of the 27 percent higher unique claims that were seen in February compared to previous year, along with I think it was an 8 percent higher weekly benefit average so far in 2023, so that sort of leads us to where we're at there.

So far in 2023, we paid out 219.5 million in benefits. Again, this is tracking about 30 percent higher than February of 2022. If we look at the previous rolling average for the previous 12 months, we're averaging about 103.8 million per month at this point through February. Next slide, please.

On the converse side on the premiums submitted, we saw quarter 4 premiums due at the end of January, so in January we saw that 250.6 million. The first two months of this year we've seen 271.6 million collected versus the first two months of 2022 was 167.1, so that's a pretty significant increase of \$104.5 million, 62 percent, primarily due to the increase in premiums for 2022 compared to the previous year. So far in March we've collected about 2.7 million in premiums, and that tracks pretty closely with March of 2022. The collections we're seeing right now are primarily from quarter 4 of 2022, and we expect this to be the lowest quarter for the calendar year this year because of wages falling over the premium cap -- excuse me, the wage cap, and then also because this will be the last time we collect at the premium rate of .6 percent. Next premium collection at the end of April will be at .8 percent, so we expect significantly higher premium remittance for that quarter. Okay, next slide please.

All right, and this is our quarterly slide showing the relationship of premiums and benefits, primarily. Over the long term, certainly you can see that our premiums have not, for the most part, kept up with the benefits until quarter 2 of 2022 where we had a couple quarters in a row where our premiums did exceed those benefits. We, again, because we expect quarter 4 premiums to be lower comparable to the other quarters, we wouldn't expect that to happen again this quarter, so I believe we'll see our benefits exceeding our premiums until we collect in April again, and then I would imagine that we would see our premiums exceed benefits by a good amount. And this slide will be updated at the close of March, so we will have new data for you on the slide next month - - at the meeting next month. Okay, next slide, please.

And this graph here shows our ending account balance for the trust fund. We ended February at 29.3 million positive balance. Our maximum balance in February was 110.9 million on February 7, and this is due to the fact that we continued to see higher premium remittance rates in the first week of February that exceeded our benefits. And at that point, after February 7th, then we again started seeing our benefits exceeding premiums coming in on a daily basis. The trust fund returned to a negative balance this month on March 7th. And, again, we'd expect that to be the case, we'd be in a negative balance until we receive our first quarter premium, the bulk of which will be received at the end of April, early May. Because the 30th of April falls on a Sunday this year,

we expect that it's going to be the bulk of our quarter 1 premiums will be split between April and May, but we'll be able to update on that remittance at the May meeting.

And as Brian noted, we do expect to be at a negative balance on June 30th, it looks to be 70 to 90 million. But, again, that depends on how our first quarter premium remittance comes in and if we continue to see benefits increase at the rate at which they are. But we'll have coverage for that, on June 30th it will bring us back to a zero balance and we'll move forward into July after that. Next slide, please.

And I believe John Mattes is going to discuss these.

**MR. MATTES:** Thank you, Steve.

I'm John Mattes, I'm the Operations Manager for the Leave and Care Division.

So here is kind of our monthly processing stats from the time someone submits their initial application until we've processed their first weekly claim and released those funds. As we see here for February of 2023, a slight decrease in the average. So we did slightly decrease the average for that from 4.5 to 4.3, and the median stayed the same for that. This is mostly due to, as I mentioned earlier, February was a very high application month, so we had over 19,000 applications come in. I will say processing for the month of February was really good, it was actually our fifth highest month of processing that we've had. So we kind of were able to keep it consistent and we expect to continue to improve as we move forward. And next slide for me, please.

And here is our telephony stats. So you'll see for February 2023 our connect rate stayed about in line with what they had been previously, and then our queue times did increase for the month by over a minute, so that is something that we're definitely kind of monitoring. There was a significant kind of increase in calls in February, so there was a 40 percent increase in calls that were coming in, which I think is what led to that slight increased queue time.

I will say the trend of calls being increased and the queue time has not continued into March. So, so far March has looked significantly better than it looked in February.

And with that, I am happy to answer any questions.

All right, not hearing any, I will turn it back over to Matt.

**MR. BUELOW:** Thanks, John. I'm going to go a little bit out of order here because we've had a couple members of the committee join since we started the presentation. So if I could get Gabbie to introduce yourself, and then, Bob, I'll ask you to do the same, please.

**MS. QUINTANA:** Hi, everybody. Gabriela Quintana from the Economic Opportunity Institute representing workers here.

**MR. BATTLES:** Bob Battles from the Association of Washington Business, we represent employers' interests.

**MR. BUELOW:** And Christine, I see you now too, and it looks like you're enjoying the sunshine.

**MS. BREWER:** Yes, from the capital. Christina Brewer here, representing employer interests.

Thanks, Matt.

**MR. BUELOW:** Glad you all could make it.

Really quickly before we dive into the program priorities, I want to go back to last month's notes. When we were at that part, we didn't have a quorum here, so we didn't discuss the notes.

Has everyone had an opportunity to review those notes? And, if so, do we have any motions to approve them?

**February Minutes were approved unanimously**

**MR. BUELOW:** Thank you for allowing me to go back and do that. For current program priorities today, we're going to talk about where the program stands today kind of from an implementation perspective. And, you know, before -- anyway, if we could advance slides, please.

So I'm going to briefly go over the legislative history of the program, then we're going to dive into what work remains, and then we're going to discuss what we think is kind of the next steps for us and have some asks for the committee's help, so we'll be doing that there. And if we could please advance slides.

I really wanted to just briefly again talk through the different changes that we've had to the program since it was first passed in 2017. I'm not going to walk through all of these lines, you all know these better than I do, but the point is the law has been touched, changed, expanded, every session since this law passed, which is fantastic, as it should be, but just a reminder that that happens.

And on the right-hand column there, I just wanted to show some of the major implementations that we did and have done and are planning to do in any given year. You will notice on the right-hand side WA Cares is mentioned. I just want to say just a couple of words about why WA Cares is mentioned. One, the other WA Cares functionality that's the second bullet in 2022, it's just a reality that that was a huge implementation for us, so it was just an acknowledgement that we implemented a program. And the other two lines, the premiums and wage reporting and elective

coverage, one is pre-delay, and then, as you know, WA Cares was delay, and the second one was post-delay. The reason why I think those are important to show here is we are implementing the WA Cares reporting into the Paid Family and Medical Leave report, so it will be one report for both programs. Because we're touching the report for WA Cares, we've also taken the opportunity to make improvements to the report that are positive for both Paid Family and Medical Leave and WA Cares.

So not all of that work, but certainly a lot of that work has benefited this program as well. If we could advance slides, please.

So next I want to talk about some of the -- well, not some, the remaining work from the initial law that passed in 2017. So there are components of that law that we have not had an opportunity to implement yet and I want to walk through those with you. Benefit overpayments and conditional payments, penalties and interest, elective coverage for tribes -- that one has a little caveat I'll come back to, child support withholding, crossmatching if someone is receiving unemployment insurance or L & I insurance for the same week, I put outreach on there which I'll come back to and talk a little bit more as well, and then IRS withholding. With the caveat of the IRS withholding, we're still waiting on a determination of taxability from the IRS. No indication that that's forthcoming any time soon, but it is something that we're going to have to address if and when we get something from the IRS, so I just wanted it out there for full disclosure.

Elective coverage for tribes, the small caveat I have for that is -- well, two. To date, we have not had a tribe ask to join the program, but if we did, we could -- we know there are some workarounds that we could use to put it into the system so that we could make it work. We haven't built the functionality for that, but we know that we could make it work if it comes up, so I think that's important to note.

And outreach, as you will recall, I would imagine, in the law we have requirements to do a certain level of outreach, and I like to think we were really, really good at it when we were building the program. And then COVID hit, right, and then of course resources had to get used in different ways, our communications resources really had to help out unemployment insurance, that was a major thing during the pandemic, and we need to figure out how to get back to it. It's hugely important and something that we want to do, but we need to figure -- we just don't have someone standing by ready to do that work so we need to figure out how we're going to do that and we want to talk about that with you.

I'll stop here for questions before going to the next slide. Christine.

**MS. BREWER:** This is Christine. I have a question.

**MR. BUELOW:** Yes.



**MS. BREWER:** Can you go into a little bit more, for example, child support and interest and penalties? Can you go into a little bit more detail on what that is and is it an IT change or what is holding you back from making those changes?

**MR. BUELOW:** Sure. So, first let me talk about child support withholding. So in the law there is a -- I won't get this exactly right, but there is a requirement that if someone is collecting Paid Family and Medical Leave benefits and owes child support.

That we work with the Department of Social and Health Services to withhold the right amount of child support and get that over to them. We have not implemented that at all.

**MS. BREWER:** So can I ask a question?

**MR. BUELOW:** Of course.

**MS. BREWER:** So was that not part of the IT design to make sure that the IT system would accommodate for that?

**MR. BUELOW:** That's a -- I'll do the best I can to answer that, I might ask for some help. It's not a design issue or whether the technology is capable of doing that. It was, as we were implementing benefits, we have a short runway and we had to make hard decisions and prioritize what gets implemented and what doesn't, knowing that we would always have to come back to this work. And we had, for a variety of reasons, many other things come up that has been prioritized over that particular thing, and I'm going to talk about some of that too. And I want to talk about some of the other remaining work that is not directly from the legislation but as important or more important even in some cases.

Bob?

**MS. BREWER:** Wait, hold on. Could you talk about penalties and interest? Is that sort of the same thing?

**MR. BUELOW:** Yes, penalties and interest, there's two types of penalties and interest on the premium side, right, if an employer is willfully not complying after we go through conference and conciliation and all of that, and then there's penalties and interest associated with benefit overpayments.

**MS. BREWER:** But you would say this is in the same category as child support collection?

**MR. BUELOW:** Right.

**MS. BREWER:** Which is -- okay. Thank you.

**MR. BUELOW:** Correct. All of these are, with the exception of outreach.

Bob?

**MR. BATTLES:** When we first asked this legislation, we were very clear to ESD and others, and I think labor folks will agree with me on this, but very clear that we wanted to make sure you had

the runway you needed. We were adamant about the timing and were assured that that was going to be the time frame and we offered it. And remember, we had still two years before you started payments. So it concerns me again -- I raise this as a concern that these are some very basic functions that should have been done years ago, not a month ago, not two months ago, but years ago. It should have been in place, frankly, before we started because we had a year of a ramp-up followed by a year of collection, so I just raise that right now and just continue my ongoing concern.

I know you folks have tried it and some of you folks were not here when that first happened, but it concerns me that a system that we spent millions of dollars on and we've stacked up can't take care of like child support which is critical for the people that need it, because some of those are not replaced from the state but those are actual people that need that child support and they're being left out. The penalties, if employers or employees are abusing the system, they should be gone after for failure to pay premiums. So I've got a real concern and I just raise that in this meeting once again.

**MR. BUELOW:** I appreciate that, Bob. Understood.

If we could advance one more slide.

So this is a list, I won't read this to you -- unless you ask me to, I'll be happy to -- this is other super important work that we know needs to be done, and we're not saying it's any lesser because it's not directly in legislation, that sort of thing, but I wanted to put a distinction between what's legislatively required versus what's just stuff we need to do and we know we need to do it, so there's no argument that we need to do all of this work. Many of these things, in fact many of these things, if not all of them, we've talked about at some level at advisory before, many of these things were things that have been brought up by you.

One second, Samantha, then I'll call on you. I do want to point out on the first bullet, reducing manual workaround and technical debt, I just want to say a few words around technical debt, which for anyone who knows technology will be abundantly clear I don't know what I'm talking about, but I always get questions on tech debt. The way that I like to talk about tech debt is you do something quickly because you have to, and it's not necessarily the right thing to do if you had all the time in the world, and then you hope to get back to it and do it the right way later. Someday doesn't always come, and so you prioritize that.

Other things I think about in tech debt, which would not actually be the definition of tech debt, we get compliance changes with the Office of the Chief Information Officer compliance standards, the bank, and we have to adjust to those things as well. So I just think about those as similar just technically not tech debt though.

Samantha.

**MS. GRAD:** Yeah, I know a couple of these things have a rulemaking that's happening right now as well. Does that in terms of timeline then -- obviously, there's more work involved beyond just that, are you envisioning that impacting the timeline or is that separate in your mind of the work that's in this kind of bucket?

**MR. BUELOW:** I mean it's related, so rulemaking has to go along with it. I'm going to talk about time frame in just a minute here.

**MS. GRAD:** Thank you.

**MR. BUELOW:** Just know that's coming. We're not going to give you an answer today, I'll warn you about that, but we're going to talk about timelines and time frames.

**MS. HUMPHREYS:** In regards to the pieces of this that require changes to the technical system, do you all have an estimate of what that cost is that you're looking at?

**MR. BUELOW:** Not yet. Sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt.

**MS. HUMPHREYS:** Yeah, I think you're hearing a lot of frustration from us, at least in some part, given that the initial startup granted was underspent by several million dollars and I'm trying to understand what that has left us with trying to identify a funding source for the scope of work needed here within a program that we all know is still trying to stabilize its own control security. So I think it would be helpful, at least for my purposes, as you all develop that estimate to kind of know so we can be collaborative and partners in trying to identify if there are opportunities for funding and advocacy partners in pursuing that.

**MR. BUELOW:** Absolutely. I appreciate that, Maggie, very much, and that's actually going to segue perfectly into the next steps and asks conversation, but I don't want to move there yet if there's additional questions or comments. Okay, let's advance slides, please.

So this is what I am proposing as kind of the next steps that we need to do. So within ESD I think what we need to do so we need to draft a plan, a timeline, to say this is what it will take to complete the remaining work. Part of that work needs to be, here is any resource needs that we have, money, people, all those things, and we also need to recommend priorities for the remaining work. It can't be all done at once, so we need to prioritize. Then we want to bring that back to you and then we want you all to provide input into that plan and the prioritization of the remaining work. And that's probably not a one-time process, I don't know yet, but we can figure that out collaboratively. And then we want your support to help tell our story as to where we are. And then assisting us, Maggie, as you said, and, Bob, you've said many times in many meetings before, if we have any resource needs, let you know, and you'll do what you can to help us there. So we're going to be coming with these things, I just don't know exactly what it's going to be at this point.

Honestly, this is not something we're going to be able to put together by next meeting, it's just too much for us to get done in the next month, but I also don't want this to sit forever. So I'm

thinking that maybe May would be a good time for us to come back with the plan. It doesn't mean we won't talk about it next month, and we can talk about agenda items when we get there as well.

Does that sound right to everybody for the next steps?

**MS. HETRICK:** Matt, I have a question if I may.

**MR. BUELOW:** Of course.

**MS. HETRICK:** The list of issues that we have, the one that concerns me is the child support issue and that piece of it. Are you trying to expedite at least that portion of this project? Because that's huge.

**MR. BUELOW:** Yes, yes. So we've not done nothing on child support. It's not implemented. What we're doing right now is we're working with the Department of Social and Health Services to look at the data, figure out how many people are we talking about, how much money, and then figure out from there what the right solution is to get it implemented and get to done.

**MS. HETRICK:** Okay. So that's not going to take this process like we're talking about now where we're going to wait until the next meeting and come back and discuss this again and look at --

**MR. BUELOW:** It's going to have to go through that process because once we determine the solution then that's going to have to be prioritized, which is not to say it's going to be the top priority or very high up, right.

**MS. HETRICK:** Okay.

**MR. BUELOW:** Does that make sense?

**MS. HETRICK:** It does. I guess I would say if there's something that we need to do to meet sooner or anything that we can do to support you that way, you know, I think we should do that as well. I don't want to delay this process.

**MR. BUELOW:** I don't either. That's great. Thank you.

Bob?

**MR. BATTLES:** Yeah, I'm with Tammie. Anything you can move forward on, move forward on now. And, again, that child support is not just because you're reimbursing the state if they're on assistance, it's also the programs that people that are using the state to help collect their child support. That is money of the mouths of babes. We need to do something here folks, I'm very concerned. And I also don't want you to set up an unrealistic timeline.

I think next meeting to have your plan, but let's have a realistic plan. But then I think we need to stick with it, and if it means you need to get resources, I guess we have to rob Peter to pay Paul. We've got to get this stuff done or we'll be talking about this two years from now, three years from now, and that is a huge problem.

**MR. BUELOW:** Understood. Thanks, Bob. Any other questions, comments, about this?

**MS. HUMPHREYS:** I guess, Matt, just to follow up on that, do you, or any members of your team if they want to respond, would it be possible to start work? Are there pieces of this that are ready enough to go, like the child support piece, that there could be some work done before going through this -- I appreciate the larger process that you're envisioning, but are there pieces that are more ready to go that could be kind of jump started now, or is that not a possibility?

**MR. BUELOW:** Alison, I'm going to ask you to dive in here, if you don't mind.

**MS. ELDRIDGE:** I was ready for that. Yes, so on the child support one we are actually working on it. It's a multi-part, we have to have a data sharing agreement with DSHS to be able to share the data across the agencies. We have a temporary one in place so that we were able to share data customer with them so they could match it with their data, and we're sort of in the middle of that process right now. We need to then executed a more permanent data sharing agreement so when we have this limited -- the initial assessment, but we are working with them on what the solution could look like. So we're makings steps, it's just been a long process.

**MS. BREWER:** This is Christine.

**MR. BUELOW:** Hi Christine.

**MS. BREWER:** I guess my question is, is the Department envisioning an IT decision package request for 2024, is that the timeline that we're looking at to solve all of these? Or is this sort of one offs and one offs? Like are we doing this one at a time? Are we looking at a decision package for 2024?

**MR. BUELOW:** Yeah -- sorry, please finish.

**MS. BREWER:** That's my first question.

**MR. BUELOW:** Okay. We don't know one hundred percent for sure yet but our thinking is we're going to want to put in the request next year not piecemeal it.

Caitlyn, is there anything you want to say about that?

**MS. GRAD:** We do hear you through Justin, but we can hear you when you talk.

**MS. JEKEL:** Okay. We're sitting in the same room and trying not to echo. Thank you.

I think -- thank you for the question. We wanted to come back to this meeting today based on the organic conversation that occurred at this last advisory meeting which made really clear it makes a lot of sense to do this not just what are the immediate projects underway right now, but also what is the totality of the work, and get your perspective on how do you want to continue this conversation moving forward, as well as the level to which you want to lean in on this conversation. We do think refining and changing the way that we articulate the body of

work and how we're building budget requests to support this program is necessary and critical, including how we show up in 2024, but to mass point really starting with doing that assessment of how the work is getting prioritized, what's the totality of the work, what are the options as far as timelines goes to compress things, get stuff done faster, or how to sort what rises to the top to be strategic in how to approach it.

So the hope is to work collaboratively with this group and make this a pretty central part of what's happening at the advisory table to make sure we're keeping visibility on it.

**MR. BUELOW:** Any other questions or discussion?

**MS. GRAD:** I just want to look up that Maggie put a technical question in the chat around this child support issue, which is kind of like going back to, you know, there's two lists here; there's the original list with the child support thing on it, and then like the expanded list. I do hear you, like you can't have a whole plan until probably May but -- I will only speak for myself, but I guess I was fairly concerned with that first list because we didn't know to ask you all about where those things were because I think for many of them we just assumed they had happened because we hadn't heard until now that they weren't. So maybe a little more detail in April where the holdups are, at least on that list of things that -- I know authorized representative hasn't happened yet, that wasn't surprising to me. But some of the things on that list were surprising to me to see were not happening. So if we could do at least a little more detail on it that list next month before a whole plan timeline in May, I think that I would find that helpful. I don't know if there are others on the advisory board who disagree or would like to weigh in.

**MR. BATTLES:** I fully agree. The expanded list was a concern because we didn't -- well, you already heard my whole concern, but some of them I've heard about and some of them are new.

**MR. BUELOW:** What would you like us to bring back?

I just want to make sure we're being responsive to be asked. Like more detail in what they are? How we would attack them? What --

**MS. GRAD:** Yes, and I think also like an understanding of -- we don't have to rehash everything, but at least a quick update on here is why this hasn't happened yet, what is the reason why we're learning that this is -- looks like Edsonya has something too.

**MR. BUELOW:** Edsonya.

**MS. CHARLES:** I just think the issues on the list are all quite serious, many of which I've shared before, but I just want to caution us as an advisory committee about making a decision about raising something to the top of the list without considering other things.

For me, I think child support is really important. Equally as important, I think, is that there isn't an overpayment process or way to collect fees and penalties for a program that's gone to the legislature for additional resources, so I think that's important as well.

So I think it's important that we take a more holistic view rather than sort of responding and making priorities sort of just based on initial impressions -- not initial impressions because it's not an issue, we've all been working with them for a while, but I think on a more holistic view.

**MR. DEFOUR:** Edsonya, just to speak to that, that's part of what this conversation is about, right, is we want everybody to have a view of all of the things so we can -- everybody can be advised, if you will, on making the best decisions, right. We know these things are out there. As Sam just said, some of these things sounds like they were unknown to some of you, and that's a missed opportunity for us to make sure that the full story is told, so we're making the best decisions for what we're doing next, right. And I think that's really what it comes down to for us is we want to make sure we're doing the most high priority things, the first thing that we can do, and we need your input on that and we need you to have a full picture of it. So that's what we're doing today and we're going to continue to do. As Matt alluded to, this isn't a one-time thing. We need to keep moving forward with this and make sure everybody is informed enough so we can all make the best decisions to continue to implement the rest of these things.

**MR. BUELOW:** Absolutely. Thanks, Justin.

**MS. HUMPHREYS:** Can I suggest for the group that -- I know during session this will be impossible, but I think it could be worth our time in the interim to set aside, you know, a good chunk of time to dive in to have the time and space to ask questions and gather information and kind of walk through the different issues and kind of technicalities as well.

**MR. BATTLES:** I think that's a good idea as well where a chunk of time is dedicated to this particular issue and nothing else, maybe in addition to a regular meeting, that we can really delve into those and understand everything that's out there because the piecemeal makes it very difficult.

**MR. BUELOW:** We're going to talk about future meetings coming up here because we don't have any scheduled beyond April. So we need to have that conversation anyway so I think that would be great.

Any other questions or discussion? Did Joe get in? Sorry, I just saw your note, Samantha..

**MS. GRAD:** Yes.

**MR. KENDO:** Yes, Joe did get in.

**MR. BUELOW:** Glad you could make it, Joe.

If we could advance slides please, this will be really quick.

I just really wanted to briefly touch on Paid Family Medical Leave and WA Cares funding because it was brought up in the last meeting, and I just want to make sure it's understood. These programs are funded by two completely different funding sources, and we don't use them to fund each other, so they're completely distinct, we charge our work to the appropriate program. Sometimes it's really easy to say this is Paid Family Medical Leave and this is WA Cares work, sometimes it's not. And so for those of us in administration, like myself, we charge our time 50/50 because we're working equally in both programs.

So we just wanted it to be known that we're not spending Paid Family Medical Leave to implement WA Cares and vice versa. Happy to take any questions or comments on that, if there are any.

**MS. BREWER:** This is Christine. I have a comment.

**MR. BUELOW:** Yes, please.

**MS. BREWER:** I guess so what you're explaining here, I mean, to me, my issue isn't necessarily the cross-pollination of the funding, but really the actual bodies. So, for example, we have this list for Paid Family Medical Leave that to me is my priority and why I'm here, but this program isn't implemented fully but you're having to spend 50 percent of your time on WA Cares, and so I'm struggling with that. And I don't have a solution, but I'm saying that that is frustrating as a Paid Family Medical Leave Business Advisory Committee member that we're now being told that FTEs are being spent or split between these two programs that, quite frankly, both aren't operating to the levels that I think expectations were laid out.

So that's a comment, you don't need to respond, but that is an underlying significant concern I have.

**MR. BUELOW:** Understood. Understood. And I am going to respond just briefly, Christine, just to hopefully help clarify just a little bit. For people like myself, that's one hundred percent true. And we have the size that we have in our division because we have both programs. If we did not have, say, WA Cares, we would not be the size that we are, so we wouldn't have the same FTE count in totality, if that makes sense. That said, I'm not using that as an excuse. I understand what you're saying and appreciate the comment.

**MS. BREWER:** I think my response is -- what I'm struggling with is, for example, the DSHS shared child support agreement. I worked at L & I, we had to work on those data agreements. I worked at DSHS, I had to work on those. But they were assigned duties, they were priorities and they got done. It's not overly complicated that it should take five years. So, to me, what it goes to is it's a priority, it's a resource issue, and you do not have enough resources to implement all the expectations that were laid out for the program. And so whatever external pressure outside of Paid Family Leave, that's where I'm struggling with.



**MR. BUELOW:** Understood.

Any other questions or comments around this?

**MS. HETRICK:** I just want to agree with Christine on that as well.

**MR. BUELOW:** Thanks, Tammie; appreciate it.

If we could advance slides and Caitlyn is going to give us an update on legislative session.

**MS. JEKEL:** Hi everybody. Thank you so much for the conversation. I know there's still a lot more work to do, but appreciate coming back to this and everybody's comments, so thank you for that.

We do have a slide that has the goal numbers that we have been communicating about through the session and I know you all are quite familiar with these and we're short on time, so I'll be quick, but if anybody has comments that they want to share, this is our space to do so.

Our Agency Request Bill 1107 which removes the master/servant language from both Title 50 and Title 50A made it off the floor today and is on its way to the governor's desk.

Our Representative Berry's Bill 1570 that a number of you were involved in a work group and reports this last interim is continuing to progress along, it is presently in Rules in the Senate.

5586 had its public hearing today in the House. And a number of you have been involved in a conversation around some possible modification to the specific data provisions of which data would be provided through that bill, keeping the implementation date that we have in the bill but making some slight modifications to that list of what that information would be available. So I would be happy to talk about that here if folks want to do so.

And then, of course, the bill that many of you, or all of you were involved in last interim pertaining to Paid Family Medical Leave premiums is in House Appropriations.

So I know other things that are not in the slide here. There's a possible proviso that a bill we had talked about in a previous meeting around some research that Maggie is involved in. I don't know, Maggie, if you wanted to make any comments on that. Certainly we are eagerly awaiting the budget release, also look for any investment in feeding the PFML resulting from the task force recommendations last summer as well.

So, with that, any questions or comments about the status of bills or budget that anyone wanted to share while we're together today?

Thanks, Maggie; just saying "Awaiting the budget release." I think we're all in the same boat.

Okay. Well, thank you very much.

**MR. BUELOW:** Alison, if you wouldn't mind touching on work group updates quickly. We have three minutes left. Happily we'll stay past 5:00, that's not an issue, but I want to request people's time.

**MS. ELDRIDGE:** I'll zoom right through just to say that we previously said that we were going to pause a little bit on the work groups until sessions were running down. At this point, we have two work groups, one for small employer premium options, one for pre-applications, and what we would like to do is just continue the pause on those work groups until we have a chance to bring back the plan for the balance of work that needs to be completed and work through prioritization. I think likely we will have possibly other work groups that committee members would like to participate in that come out of those conversations, and so to just kind of hold steady for a little bit until we have those discussions and then decide the path forward for those work groups.

**MR. BUELOW:** Okay. I'm going to ask Roberta to come on now and talk about April's meeting and future meeting dates.

**MS. KOWALD:** So if you're not familiar with me, my name is Roberta Kowald, I am the legislative coordinator for Leave and Care. And one of the things we wanted to do was, as Matt mentioned, we only have one more meeting scheduled for April, and topics that you want to see. I was going to say, because we're really short on time, if you want to email those to me or Matt, or you have something that you think of in the middle of the night, just let me know, or if there's anything today that you would like to bring up that you would really like to see us discuss next meeting.

**MR. KENDO:** I guess I would just echo the need for a prioritization conversation. It may be longer than an hour for that meeting.

**MS. KOWALD:** Sure, yes.

**MR. KENDO:** I don't know what folks' timing feels like on that, but April is probably not a good one, but maybe May.

**MS. KOWALD:** If you want me to schedule sometime in May, if that sounds right for people, I can schedule a longer discussion where we just talk about the priorities. If that sounds like something you would like to do, I'm more than happy to get that up and running for people and we can make that happen.

Because it sounds like from today there's a lot of things that people would like to see just an idea of where we're going. So does that sound like a plan?

**MS. HETRICK:** If we wait until May, does that delay anything?

**MR. BUELOW:** We are not going to hold up work to talk about it in a meeting, so no.

**MS. HETRICK:** I just want to make sure.

**MR. BUELOW:** That's a great question. No, we will not --

**MS. KOWALD:** We won't be waiting around until the meeting.

**MR. BATTLES:** And we really can't focus on it until after session on the 23rd of April.

**MS. KOWALD:** That's a good point, Bob, yes.

**MR. BATTLES:** I'd say please avoid the second week -- I'm completely out with our outreach meetings the week of the 8th of May.

**MS. KOWALD:** So I'll pick a day mid-May for that conversation. Similar time, similar day, does that work for people or --

**MR. BUELOW:** Roberta, I would encourage us to send out like a Doodle poll to find out what folks' availability is, and we'll get it scheduled when folks are available.

**MS. KOWALD:** Absolutely.

**MS. GRAD:** It's challenging for kiddo pickup, it sounds like, on our side.

**MS. KOWALD:** I get that.

**MR. BATTLES:** With session done too we can also move it earlier in the day, and Wednesdays and Thursdays become more available now and it's a lot of things like that.

**MS. KOWALD:** Yes, I will put together a poll and I will get that out to folks this week and we can start picking out some dates that you think might work for people. Any topics you specifically want us to do for the April meeting?

**MS. CHARLES:** I don't know if you can see, I've got my hand up, I've had it up for a while.

**MS. KOWALD:** I apologize.

**MS. CHARLES:** This is Edsonya Charles, I'm the Paid Family Medical Leave Ombuds. I haven't given the reports closing out 2022, don't know whether you guys are interested in hearing that next month. Also want to update you on some changes that we've made to hardship processing that substantially reduce the wait time that customers have to wait to request hardship, and would like to present more to you about that at some point. So just want to offer that up.

**MS. KOWALD:** Okay. Does that sound like something folks would like to see on the agenda next month?

**MR. BUELOW:** We've got a visual thumbs up from Samantha, at least.

**MS. KOWALD:** Okay. Good. I should have said thumbs up if you think that's a good idea. I will make sure that that's on the agenda for next month and we'll make sure that we reach out to you and get some information from you.

And I think the next thing we wanted to talk about was next upcoming meetings, because we only have one scheduled for April, and then after that we don't have anything yet. So right now it's been the third or fourth Wednesday of every month. How is this working? I can send out a poll and we can take a look at that.

**MR. BATTLES:** I think Doodle poll. And it's usually the Wednesdays and it's not usually 4:00 to 5:00, that was because they needed to do it for session. So I would look at the ones that took place prior to December and send the Doodle poll is my recommendation.

**MS. KOWALD:** I will do that.

**MS. GRAD:** They were Thursdays before, which weren't great for me. So if you send a Doodle poll, that's probably good. I know we talked about the cadence potentially not switching to every month, but I would recommend we keep it at every month.

**MS. KOWALD:** That was the other thing I was going to ask is if you want to keep it at every month at this point or more often. It's whatever works for you all cone.

**MS. CHARLES:** I would say include that in the poll as well.

**MS. KOWALD:** Okay. It's going to be a big poll. So I will be more than happy to make sure that we come up with some really good options that we can hopefully come up with some things that are going to work for people. So I think that's all I have right now. I'll get that poll out to people this week and we'll see what we can work with and see how we can best serve you and what you're looking for and what you need. And, yeah, it's going to be a big one.

So, Matt, I'll turn it back to you.

**MR. BUELOW:** Sure, thanks. I want to respect people's time. We are after 5:00. As I said, myself, my team, we're happy to stay here and will stay here. I want to afford everyone the opportunity for comment, but if anyone from the committee has to leave, I understand.

So, with that, do we have any comments from the public? I'm not seeing any hands, nothing in comments. Doesn't look like we have anyone on phone today.

With that, we'll close this month's meeting and we look forward to further discussion. And you'll be getting all kinds of polls from Roberta so we can figure out when we're going to talk next. And thank you for attending and I hope everyone is enjoying the little bit of sunshine that we're getting, at least in the Olympia area. So have a good evening.

(Concluded at 5:06 p.m.)