

## ***Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services***

*Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services  
560 South Lawrence Street  
Montgomery, Alabama  
Minutes  
Thursday, March 6, 2025*

### **Call to Order:**

Mr. Charles Wilkinson, Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m.

### **Prayer:**

Dr. Graham Sisson, Jr., Executive Director of the Alabama Governor's Office on Disability (GOOD), opened the board meeting with prayer.

### **Verification of Quorum:**

**Board members present:** Mr. Charles Wilkinson, Board Chair; Mr. Kevin Kidd, Board Vice-Chair; Ms. Judith Gilliam; Mrs. Norma Lemley; Ms. Kimberlin Love; and Mr. Eddie Williams. A quorum was declared.

**Board members absent:** Ms. Michelle Glaze

Interpreting services were provided.

### **Verification of the Open Meetings Act Notice:**

The Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services' board meeting was conducted in-person and open to the public. The Open Meetings Act allows for electronic participation except to establish a quorum. The Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services requires four members to attend in-person to establish a quorum, but other members may participate via conference call.

Mrs. Karen Freeman verified that the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services announcement for the Thursday, March 6, 2025, meeting, was posted on the Alabama Secretary of State's website on Tuesday, February 11, 2025, at 4:17 p.m.

The meeting announcement was posted on the Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services' public website on Tuesday, February 18, 2025, and made available at the following link:  
<https://rehab.alabama.gov/about/meet-our-board>.

### **Approval of Agenda:**

The board meeting agenda was mailed prior to the meeting. Mr. Wilkinson asked for a motion to approve the agenda. The motion to approve the agenda was made by Mr. Kidd, Vice-Chair, and Mrs. Lemley seconded the motion. Mr. Wilkinson stated there were no changes and/or additions to the agenda and it was approved by unanimous consent.

### **Approval of Minutes for December 5, 2024, Quarterly Meeting:**

The quarterly board meeting minutes were mailed prior to the meeting. Mr. Wilkinson asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented, for the Dec. 5, 2024, board meeting. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Mrs. Lemley and seconded by Mr. Williams. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **Approval of Minutes for December 5, 2024, Executive Session:**

The Executive Session board minutes were mailed prior to the meeting. Mr. Wilkinson asked for a motion to approve the minutes as presented, for the Dec. 5, 2024, Executive Session meeting. The motion to approve the minutes was made by Mr. Williams and seconded by Mrs. Lemley. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### **New Business:**

#### **Alabama Ethics Commission, 2024 Statement of Economic Interests**

Mrs. Ashley Hamlett, General Counsel, reported the Statement of Economic Interests should be completed and filed with the Alabama Ethics Commission no later than April 30, 2025, for calendar year 2024. The Statement of Economic Interests form could be completed by visiting the website, <https://www.ethics.alabama.gov>. Specific instructions for completing the form were available on the website, if needed. If you have any questions, please contact Mrs. Hamlett at [Ashley.Hamlett@rehab.alabama.gov](mailto:Ashley.Hamlett@rehab.alabama.gov).

#### **Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, Appointments and Confirmations**

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported Mr. Charles Wilkinson and Mr. Kevin Kidd were reappointed to the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services by Governor Kay Ivey. Pursuant to the Constitution of Alabama and pertinent statutes, the Alabama Senate confirmed the appointments of Mr. Wilkinson and Mr. Kidd as members of the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services. This represents Mr. Wilkinson's second full-term (seven years) and Mr. Kidd's first full-term, having completed the term of a previous board member.

## **Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, Eligibility Requirements**

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services consists of seven members, one from each U.S. Congressional District. Board members are appointed by the Governor and confirmed by the Alabama Senate. Alabama law requires that three members be individuals with a disability selected from consumer disability organizations, one member be the parent of a child with a disability, and three members be from organizations of business and industry within the state.

The board's responsibilities include making rules and regulations for the provision of rehabilitation services, directing and supervising the expenditure of legislative appropriations, disseminating information concerning and promoting interest in disability and rehabilitation issues, taking appropriate action to guarantee the rights of and services to people with disabilities, and serving as the governing body of programs administered by the department.

## **Nomination/Election of Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, Chair**

Mr. Wilkinson opened nominations from the floor for potential candidates for Board Chair. Mr. Kidd made a motion to nominate Mr. Wilkinson for a two-year term as Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services Chair. After discussion, the motion was seconded by Mrs. Lemley, and Mr. Wilkinson was unanimously approved. Mr. Wilkinson expressed his appreciation for the nomination and indicated he would rise to the challenge and that it would be his honor to serve as Chair.

## **Nomination/Election of Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, Vice-Chair**

Mr. Wilkinson opened nominations from the floor for potential candidates for Board Vice-Chair. Ms. Gilliam made a motion to nominate Mr. Kidd for a two-year term as Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services Vice-Chair. After discussion, the motion was seconded by Mr. Williams, and Mr. Kidd was unanimously approved. Mr. Kidd expressed his appreciation for the nomination and stated he would be honored to serve as Vice-Chair.

Commissioner Burdeshaw, the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services, and ADRS leadership expressed their sincere gratitude to Mr. Wilkinson and Mr. Kidd for their hard work and dedication as Board Chair and Board Vice-Chair for the past two-year officer's term. Mr. Wilkinson and Mr. Kidd expressed their heartfelt appreciation in serving the past two years as the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services Board Chair and Vice-Chair. They stated it has been their pleasure to be a part of the mission of the department that works so hard to improve the lives of so many Alabamians.

## **Division Updates**

The Executive Leadership Team members were provided an opportunity to give updates to their written reports and answer any questions.

## **Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services 2024 Annual Report**

Mrs. Jill West, Governmental Relations Manager and Director of Office of Communications and Information (OCI) presented a hard copy of the 2024 Annual Report.

### **Commissioner's Comments**

#### ***Legislative and Administrative Updates***

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported the Legislative session began the first week of February 2025. The major difference this year is that the session happens to coincide with the first 100 days of a new federal administration. Commissioner Burdeshaw emphasized the importance of having a unified voice to establish a consistent and recognizable message across all touchpoints.

Commissioner Burdeshaw expressed appreciation to Governor Ivey; Finance Director, Bill Poole; and the staff in the Executive Budget Office; for supporting the department's requests including the proposal from the Veteran's Steering Committee (VSC) to expand Traumatic Brain Injury programs and services. The Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services previously received the overall budget request for FY 2026 that included additional funding for the State of Alabama Independent Living (SAIL) program and received an email containing the specifics shared with the VSC.

Commissioner Burdeshaw continues to work with the Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) as the Policy Committee Chair and President-Elect on the reauthorization of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) and the Continuing Resolution (CR) being drafted by the Congressional Appropriations members. The Budget CR is the most critical issue due to the impending deadline of March 14, 2025. The primary concern for Vocational Rehabilitation is the cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) that was available annually until last year when those funds were re-directed to Homeland Security. The proposed CR indicates a reduction to the program's COLA for the second year. WIOA reauthorization is also back on the table. However, the House and Senate versions do not align. While changes to Title IV (VR) are not specifically addressed in either Bill, the joint provisions impacting all four titles are up for discussion. The national VR program is sharing their thoughts with Congress about the proposed changes. The Governor's Policy office and the new Workforce Secretary, Greg Reed, are also very active in discussions on Capitol Hill.

At the national level, there are several major concerns. One issue is the dismantling of the U.S. Department of Education (USDOE). The Vocational Rehabilitation Service (VRS) and Alabama's Early Intervention System are directly funded through USDOE. Commissioner Burdeshaw's primary goal is to make sure that statutorily mandated programs that ADRS provides are continued and that funding follows them. CSAVR will have a position statement and consensus on the potential location of the

VRS program in other federal agencies should the USDOE be dismantled. VRS could move to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services if the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitation Services (OSERS) and Rehabilitation Services Administrators (RSA) are moved there or VRS could move to the U.S. Department of Labor. Commissioner Burdeshaw requested permission from the Board to participate in a pre-meeting (telephone call) on March 14, 2025, with CSAVR and Congressman Robert Aderholt. Congressman Aderholt is a member of the House Committee on Appropriations, which oversees federal government funding. He is the Chairman of the Appropriations Subcommittee on Labor, Health & Human Services, and Education. The motion to approve Commissioner Burdeshaw's participation in the pre-meeting (telephone call) to discuss VRS appropriations with representatives from CSAVR and Congressman Aderholt was made by Mrs. Lemley and seconded by Mr. Williams. The Board offered their unanimous consent and support to Commissioner Burdeshaw regarding her participation.

Commissioner Burdeshaw reported Alabama is one of 17 states that together filed a lawsuit, *Texas v. Kennedy* (formerly *Texas v. Becerra*), challenging the 2024 regulations under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act but also challenging the constitutionality of the entire Rehabilitation Act. The states ask, among other requests, the Court to declare the Act unconstitutional and enjoin the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services from enforcing the Act. Commissioner Burdeshaw and Mrs. Ashley Hamlett, General Counsel, contacted Governor Ivey and Attorney General, Steve Marshall, to provide them information on the potential impact of the court decision in this case. The Alabama Department of Rehabilitation Services, Alabama's lead agency in serving individuals with disabilities to achieve their maximum potential, respectfully requested any assistance the Governor can provide in protecting Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. The challenged regulations can be repealed by the current presidential administration while leaving intact the Act.

## **Announcements:**

### ***Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services meeting dates for 2025***

- *Thursday, June 26, 2025 – 10:00 a.m., Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel – Jubilee Suite, 64 S. Water Street, Mobile, Alabama 36602*

Commissioner Burdeshaw announced the Alabama Board of Rehabilitation Services is scheduled to meet on Thursday, June 26, 2025, at 10:00 a.m., at the Renaissance Riverview Plaza Hotel located at 64 S. Water Street, Mobile, Alabama. The meeting will be held on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor of the conference area. The ADRS Board meeting will coincide with the Alabama Association for Persons in Supported Employment (AL-APSE) Conference. Additional information will be provided once plans for the board meeting are finalized.

- Thursday, September 11, 2025 – 10:00 a.m., ADRS Montgomery/State Office
- Thursday, December 4, 2025 – 10:00 a.m., ADRS Montgomery/State Office

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 10:59 a.m.

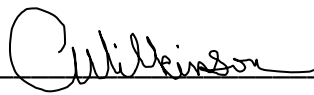
Minutes were taken by Mrs. Karen Freeman.

Respectfully submitted:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Jane Elizabeth Burdeshaw", written over a horizontal line.

Jane E. Burdeshaw, Commissioner

Approved:

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "C. Wilkinson", written over a horizontal line.

Charles E. Wilkinson, Chair