

## MEETING OF THE TEXAS WORKFORCE COMMISSION

**DATE** 

**SEPTEMBER 15, 2020** 

## TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 15, 2020

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Well, good morning, everyone. This meeting is called to order. Mr. Trobman, has anyone signed up for public comment.

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MR. TROBMAN: Good morning, Commissioners. For the record, Mr. Trobman, general counsel.

We do have one comment, sir. Ms. Merrill, if you could go ahead and unmute yourself and introduce yourself for the record.

MS. MERRILL: Yes. Good morning. I'm Rebecca Merrill. Good morning, Commissioners and staff. I have signed up for public comment because my husband and I were really in need of help with his unemployment claim. He had filed for unemployment back in June, and we had--we've been in limbo, essentially. He received some correspondence, but he hadn't been denied. We had never gotten any documentation saying your claim cannot be paid, but he also hadn't received a payment. And so, what we ended up doing was, he filed an appeal even though we never officially had been denied, and hadn't had the appeal--haven't seen the appeal recorded in his, sort of, online mailbox that he has with the Commission. Haven't seen that recorded. So, I decided that I needed to come before y'all and ask for help. I'm glad I did, and I want to say that your staff is very responsive. I submitted my comments yesterday in writing, and since then they've reached out and I've had some

conversations and gotten some answers. And so, hopefully it looks like things are moving forward with his case, and so I really appreciate that. So, your staff has been super responsive since I signed up to speak. And I know that y'all have [unintelligible] work, you know, a huge amount of work that's come before you since all this has happened, and so I—and I understand and believe that y'all are doing the best you can to help everybody. I just wanted to sign up to speak today to make sure this case didn't fall between the cracks because we have been in limbo, but it looks like since then now hopefully we're going to be getting some movement on it. So, that's all I wanted to say, and I just wanted to say thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Ms. Merrill, thank you for

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Ms. Merrill, thank you for taking time to do that. I appreciate you working through the process. I'm certainly pleased to hear that our staff was able to get on that and take the information you gave them, and I hope you guys get an answer or at least closer to an answer. I think there's [unintelligible]. So, I really appreciate your understanding of the process and helping us, you know, get you the information that you need to help you. Commissioners, any other comments or questions for Ms. Merrill?

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thank you very much,
Ms. Merrill.

MS. MERRILL: Thank you.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you so much.

1 MS. MERRILL: Take care. 2 MR. TROBMAN: Commissioners, that's the 3 entirety of the registrants we have this morning. 4 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Thank you, Mr. 5 Trobman. Good morning, Ms. Miller. MS. MILLER: Good morning, sir. 6 7 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: This brings us to the -- oh, 8 motion passes with the exceptions that are noted. I should do 9 that first and then say this brings us to the end of Agenda Items 3 through 7. Let's pause for a few minutes to reset for 10 11 the rest of the meeting. 12 MS. MILLER: Thank you, Mr. Chairman. 13 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. 14 All right, Commissioners. Are we ready to 15 tackle the rest of this agenda? 16 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yes, sir. 17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Perfect. 18 we're gonna move to Agenda Item 8. Discussion, consideration and 19 possible action regarding proposed rule amendments to 40 TAC, 20 Chapter 802, Subchapter I, relating to the issuance of workforce 21 awards. 22 MR. MULLINS: Hi. Good morning, Chair 23 Daniel, Commissioners, Mr. Serna. For the record, I'm Joel 24 Mullins with Workforce Development.

Texas Workforce Commission Chapter 802, 2 Integrity of the Texas Workforce System Rules, Subchapter I, 3 allow the Commission to establish monetary and non-monetary 4 awards to encourage and recognize the work of boards and AL 5 grant recipients. On March 17 the Commission approved a policy 6 concept outlining recommended amendments to these rules to align 7 with current Workforce work practices, remove provisions that 8 are not longer required under [unintelligible] and verify the 9 Commission's authority to issue awards. The policy concept was 10 posted on the TWC website for a free week board comment period 11 and no comments were received. At this time, staff seeks 12 directions on proposed amendments to Chapter 802, Subchapter I 13 as reflected in your meeting materials for publication in the 14 Texas Register for a 30-day public comment period. And I'm 15 happy to answer any questions you may have. 16

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Comments or questions?

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No, Chairman.

COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Do we have a

motion?

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COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I move that we approve [unintelligible] modifications to Chapter 802, Integrity of the Workforce System to be posted to the Texas Register for comment as discussed by staff.

COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.

1 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and 2 seconded. We're unanimous. 3 For Item 9, Integrated complaints, 4 hearings, and appeals, Chapter 823, I'm informed this item is 5 being postponed to a future meeting. 6 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay. 7 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Move to Agenda Item 10. Discussion, consideration and possible action regarding proposed 8 9 Rules Related to New 40 TAC Chapter 838, Texas industry-10 recognized apprenticeship programs grant program. 11 MS. BALLAST: Good morning, Chairman. How's 12 my audio? 13 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Good. 14 MS. BALLAST: Okay, thank you. Good 15 morning, Chair Daniel, Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner 16 Demerson, and Mr. Serna. For the record, Kerry Ballast, 17 Workforce Development Division. 18 House bill 2784 enacted by the 86 Texas 19 legislature amended Chapter 302 of the Texas Labor Code by 20 adding Subchapter I, creating the Texas-industry-recognized 21 apprenticeship program, or IRAP's grant program, to address 22 Texas's immediate industrial workforce needs resulting from the 23 impact of hurricanes, other natural disasters, and overall 24 workforce shortages. The proposed rules address topics such as 25 the following: Administration and enforcement of grant program

requirements; eligibility criteria; reimbursements; guidelines for determining the economic impact offended programs, and the establishment of total grant funds to be awarded to a grant or recipient. At this time, staff seek direction on approval of proposed rules for new Chapter 838 to be published in the Texas Register for a 30-day comment period. Thank you, and I'm available to answer any questions you may have.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any questions or comments?

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, the only

comments I'd like to say is, first of all, I'd like to thank

Kerry for all the work that she's put into this, and Desi, since

our last legislative session. And I can assure that many people

are interested in this IRAP program, the 2784 that was

introduced by [unintelligible]. So, great work. We look

forward to seeing more--people are actually looking forward to

his process and seeing what's gonna come out of it. So, again,

thank you, Kerry, and to Desi and her team for putting this all

together and working on it so hard.

MS. BALLAST: Thank you.

COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Chair, I think it offers employers another opportunity, and so we're looking forward to it. Self-sufficiency wages, that was something that Kerry, our team discussed with you guys, and so that was a new idea that we hadn't heard, but I know that's talked about

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   already. And so, congratulations on getting it to this point.
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   Looking forward to having it posted.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Thank you.
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   we have any motions?
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I move that we
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   approve the proposed rules as recommended relating to Chapter
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   838 to be published in the Texas Register for public comment.
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                         COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
   seconded. We're unanimous. Thank you.
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                         MS. BALLAST: Thank you.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Move to Agenda Item 11,
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   discussion, consideration and possible action regarding the
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   Texas Workforce Commission Fiscal Year 2021 Itemized Operating
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   Budget and 2022-23 Legislative Appropriations Request.
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                         MR. NELSON: Good morning, Chairman,
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   Commissioners, Mr. Serna. For the record, Chris Nelson, Chief
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   Financial Officer.
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                         This morning I will be presenting three
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   items for consideration that will part of our '22-'23
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   legislative appropriation request. I will present the capital
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   and exceptional items, five percent reduction, and our proposed
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   rider revisions separately, and ask for any questions, comments,
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   or motions after each item to ensure the record is clear what
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   comments or motions pertain to each item.
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1 The first item we will go over this morning 2 are budget and exceptional items discussed last week. 3 [Unintelligible] unchanged with the exception of listing the 4 apprenticeship expansion item raised by Commissioner Alvarez 5 last meeting. You should all [unintelligible] Commissioner 6 Alvarez's request as a separate document. As nothing else 7 related to the previous cap or budget items are changed at this 8 time, I will be happy to answer any questions regarding capital 9 budget and exception items. 10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Any comments 11 or questions for Chris? 12 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, at this 13 time I'd like to make some comments regarding this exceptional 14 item that I talked about last week. 15 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Mm-hmm. 16 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: As you know--is that 17 okay? 18 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah, sure. 19 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay. Commissioners, 20 last week, as you know, I presented an exceptional item request 21 for your consideration. I believe that the narrative of that 22 item has been distributed to the offices as requested. I would 23 also like to propose 1.5 million of GR for development and 24 implementation of both youth and adult apprenticeship career 25 pathways into registered apprenticeship training programs.

Texas Education Code Chapter 133 allows for pre-apprenticeship training leading to related classroom training for apprentices. Apprentices are full-time paid employees, keep in mind, in the private sector, impacting not only the apprentice's life, but the Texas economy. Pre-apprenticeship places both youth and adults in career pathways with built-in advancement to salaries in excess of \$60,000 annually. Pre-apprenticeship can be key in preparing both youth and adults for highly skilled, highly paid careers in a wide variety of industries and their apprenticeable occupations. Pre-apprenticeship programs provide students with stackable credentials upon completion which allow them to continue studies at a community college, which we all know as the Bridge Program that we have in place with numerous colleges around the state of Texas. This initiative will support the highly--correction. This initiative will support the higher education goals of Texas 60 by 30, and the tri-agency work, by ensuring that 60 percent of Texans from the ages of 25 to 34 obtain certificates or degrees by 2030. In the first year, I would like the allocation to be \$500,000 in 2022, and one million in 2023. Dividing up the funding in this matter would allow our apprenticeship team to ramp up. Those are my comments specifically for this exception item.

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CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Any other questions or comments? So, expanding our conversation from last week, I just want to continue to express my thoughts on my

opposition to including this as an exceptional item. While certainly I support the apprenticeship program, I think it's actually one of our strongest opportunities to address both some real skills issues that I see and I some trades issues that I see in the state. I just am very concerned about the current fiscal environment that I believe the state of Texas is going to be operating in as we approach the next session, and I just don't think the time's right for us to add an exceptional item to what I think is already gonna be a little bit of a strained budget. I did consult with staff following last week's meeting, and my understanding is, is we have the ability to push some dollars that we have currently to pre-apprenticeship type programming, pre-apprenticeship type activities that we could see out there. And my preference, obviously, would be to take the available dollars that we have, some funds that were budgeted, and at least at this time move that money to some preapprenticeship programs, so that we can see the program move that way rather than ask for the exceptional item. We have a motion that's tabled. I'm prepared to offer an amendment to that motion should we pull it back down off the table, to not do this. Certainly we need to discuss this and, you know, everybody needs to make sure they get all their questions and answered and whatever comments are germane to this on the table. So, before we pull down that motion from the table and consider the motion that was before us last week, I just want to make

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sure that everybody's had a chance to address any questions or comments that they might have.

Stand by my previous comments. I, too, applaud the efforts of the apprenticeship and what Commissioner Alvarez is bringing to the table, but under this current situation with the budgetary practices [unintelligible] budget that we're pushing forward are recommended by staff full support of, but the exceptional items at this particular point in time, I'm of the opinion it's not in the best interest of the agency to push forward in that direction. That's my opinion at this point.

I may address the remarks that were made by the Commissioners, please keep in mind that this is a request that we're making for just \$1.5 million. It's a request. It's not money that we're setting aside. It's something that we're gonna request from the legislature. Whether they fund it or not, it's just a request on our behalf. I understand the concerns of the Commissioners, but, again, it's a request. It's not a huge amount. I will tell you that the only amount, and I'm not sure exactly—the conversations that I've had with staff is the only funding that I know that supports apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship is [unintelligible], and that comes in the form of \$1.6 million. And so, it's not like some of the other services where they can use blended services like [unintelligible], you know, skills. I

mean, those are blended. You know, we cannot use DOL funding for specific programs that we have here listed. So, whether the optics may appear that we have a lot of money when we received the \$9.4 from the Department of Labor, those monies specifically are used for certain areas of apprenticeship. It's not for, you know, IRAPS or some of the other programs that are industry partners have shown concern with. I will tell you that we did get a good plug a couple of weeks ago from a young lady that was part of the 2784 signing event that we were at, Commissioner, and so just want to keep in mind that we are--it's just an ask from the agency in a very small amount. But I certainly understand your concerns. The worst they could do is say, "no," but, again, conversations that I've had with, you know, our folks, you know, outside of this agency has been they're supporting this initiative. I think we're gonna see that, and again, I would like to remind everyone that it's part of the tri-agency initiative. I mean, pre-apprenticeship is listed and apprenticeship is listed for the first time 20 times in the report that we submitted to the governor, and the governor, as you know, was very supportive of the apprenticeship program, and I continue to see some momentum in this upcoming legislative session, and it's just an ask, but I understand your concerns. CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Thank you.

So, I'm recommending we take from the table the motion that we

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   tabled last meeting. Is there any objection to bringing that
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   motion back for consideration?
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I move to amend that
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   motion with an amendment that would strike the exceptional item
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   request as presented by Commissioner Alvarez, and that would
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   restore the motion to the original recommendation made by staff.
   So, that would require a second, but that is my motion.
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                         COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second that
   motion.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. So, it's been
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   moved and seconded to amend the motion that was presented last
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   week.
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                         Let me at this time--I went ahead and
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   prepared materials of what that motion would say. Could I ask
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   the general counsel's office to distribute that the Commission
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   offices at this time?
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                         MR. TROBMAN: Yeah. Distributing it as we
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   speak.
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                         COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Chairman, I
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   thought[unintelligible] was going to hand walk them.
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                         MR. TROBMAN: I will definitely do that as
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   well.
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                         COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: [Unintelligible]
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   Electronic works.
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MR. TROBMAN: They are on the way.

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: So, Chairman, if I may ask again, for the record, if you could read your motion so that I can--for the record, I can acknowledge what my response is gonna be to that.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Sure. My motion in effect restates the staff recommendation from last week. So, it would be the staff recommendation from last week's Commission meeting, and it would be the materials that are in your book today with the exception of it would eliminate the Commission Exceptional Item Proposal that's on Page Six of six, up-to-date materials. Otherwise, the rest of the staff recommendation will remain intact.

COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay. Got it.

CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I'm pausing. I just want to make sure everybody has a chance to see what was motioned and I want to make sure you have a chance to review that, and if there's any questions or clarifications that I can make, I'll be more than happy to do that. So, the pause is just simply so that you have an opportunity to look at what I'm proposing.

COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Mr. Chairman, I've had a chance to look at it, and it looks like it's pretty much in line with what was presented. There may be [unintelligible] to Number 5, the Internet Redesign, or Number 6, Enhance

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   Customer Communication [unintelligible]. I don't see any other
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   changes there.
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, if I may,
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   could I ask for a few minute recess?
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah, absolutely.
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Okay. Because I
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   haven't had a chance to see this.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Absolutely.
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Thank you.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Has everyone
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   had an opportunity to review all the documents?
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Yes, Chairman.
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   have them both here. Les, just dropped them off.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay, great. Great.
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   the business before the Commission right now is an amendment
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   with a second to the original motion. Primary procedure here
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   would indicate that barring any further discussion, we would
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   take a vote on the question to amend the original motion. Is
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   there any other discussion? Being none, let me go ahead and
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   just take a quick vote. This is to amend the motion per my
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   amendment. Commissioner Alvarez, how would you vote?
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I have nothing to
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   say.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Okay. Commissioner
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   Demerson?
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1 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Vote in favor of the 2 motion. 3 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I would vote in favor. 4 the motion is [unintelligible] to the staff proposal with the 5 exception of the apprenticeship initiative expansion eliminated 6 from the main motion. Is there any further discussion on that 7 motion? 8 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No, thank you, 9 Chairman. Further document. 10 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Well, let's proceed to 11 vote then on the motion as amended. This is the amended motion. 12 Commissioner Alvarez, how would you vote on the amended motion? 13 COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I abstain from this 14 vote. CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Commissioner Demerson? 15 16 COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I vote in favor. 17 CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I also vote in favor. The 18 motion carries as amended. Gentlemen, thank you for a very 19 thoughtful and considered debate. These matters are significant 20 They've all attested to a great program. Honestly a matters. 21 tough decision to make. We all have our reasons for doing that, 22 and I don't often enough express my gratitude for the 23 professional way in which we can take up these issues. 24 sincerely appreciate everyone's commitment to what we're trying 25 to do here.

MR. NELSON: Chairman are we

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CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah. I think that addresses 11(a) and 11(b). Let's move to 11(c).

MR. NELSON: So, the second we will discuss is the five percent GR reduction TWC must make as part of its '22-'23 LAR submission. TWC's five percent GR based reduction amounts to \$20,105,004 over the biennium. You have a document based on staff recommendations to meet this required five percent cut. The items are listed one through seven and include a brief description including if there's a rider impact. The first item is an \$8 million reduction in our employment services strategy. This would be directly related to Rider 28 in our bill pattern in which we receive GR to provide grants for these services. The second item is a reduction in our AEL strategy. This would limit our ability to provide services under the rider for the Workforce Diploma Pilot Project in '22 and '23. third is reduction in our BET strategy. This is GR dedicated revenue, meaning we can only spend revenue we collect, and this revenue has been decreasing, so a budget reduction will be eventually necessary even without the five percent reduction. [Unintelligible] item is to sweep fund 165 GR which consists of UI penalties and interest that were not budgeted in the labor Item 5 is a reduction to the vocational rehab GR. law program. This one does have a federal impact as any reduction reduces the

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   amount of federal funds that can be matched, but we feel
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   confident there are sufficient federal grant balances that we
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   can run the program with no reduction in services throughout
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   2023. Items 6 and 7 are proportional reductions to the JET and
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   Skill programs that get us to the required $20 million.
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   two would limit the amount of Skills and JET grants TWC could
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   issue in '22 and '23. That concludes my comments, and I would
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   be happy to answer any questions at this time.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Are there any comments or
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   questions?
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No, Chairman. Not at
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   this time.
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                         COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: All right. Do we have any
   motions?
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I move that we
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   approve the recommendation base reduction options as presented
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   by staff.
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                         COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: I also [unintelligible]
   has been moved and seconded and we're unanimous.
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                         MR. NELSON: The last item I will cover are
   proposed rider revisions as part of LAR. Most revisions amount
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   to technical corrections, but there are a few I will call out.
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   The first is Rider 28 which is related to our GR reduction item
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   just discussed. The next is a removal of Rider 46, which was a
   one-time request to review the AEL program. The last one is a
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   new rider that will allow TWC to move an unexpended balances of
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   its UI system replacement and [unintelligible] case management
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   replacement out of the '20-2021 biennium into the '22-'23
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   biennium. If this rider is not approved, we will make a request
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   at the legislature to add these two projects for our capital and
   exceptional items for '22 and '23. I would also ask for the
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   ability to make any other technical edits as we submit our LAR.
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   That concludes my comments, and I would be happy to answer any
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   questions.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions
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   for Chris?
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: No, Chairman.
                         COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: None here.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Do we have any
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   motions?
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: I move that we
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   approve the fiscal year 2022-2023 riders as presented by staff.
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                         COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
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   second. I think we're unanimous on this one as well.
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                         MR. NELSON: Thank you. And that concludes
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   my item.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. I'm told that
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   staff does not have anything to present for Item 12, statewide
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   initiatives.
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                         Let's move to Item 13, which is our
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   disaster standing item. Do we have any updates on your Item 13?
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                         MR. SERNA: Sorry. I was muted. No, sir,
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   we do not.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: No? Item 14, discussion,
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   consideration and possible action regarding approval of local
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   Workforce Development Board nominees.
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                         MS. WILLIAMS: Good morning, Chairman
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   Daniel, Commissioner Alvarez, Commissioner Demerson and Mr.
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   Serna. For the record, Shunta Williams with the Workforce
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   Development Division.
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                         And before you for consideration today we
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   have Workforce Board nominees for Workforce Solutions Alamo,
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   Tarrant County, Middle Rio Grande, Northeast Texas, West Central
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   Texas, and Panhandle. This concludes my request, and I'm here
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   to answer any questions you may have.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Any comments or questions?
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, no
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   questions or comments at this time.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. Do we have a
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   motion?
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                         COMMISSIONER: Yes, sir. I move that we
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   approve the board nominees for Alamo, Tarrant County, Middle Rio
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   Grande, Northeast Texas, West Central Texas, and Panhandle.
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                         COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: I second.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It's been moved and
   seconded. We're unanimous. Thank you.
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                         I'm told there's not Legislative Report
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   today. Do we have an Executive Director's report today?
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                         MR. McCARTY: No, sir. I have nothing to
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   report.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Thank you. The time is
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   now 10:04. The Texas Workforce Commission is now going into
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   execution session to discuss the appointment, employment,
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   evaluation, reassignment, duties, discipline, or dismissal of
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   the Executive Director, Internal Auditor, Executive Staff, and
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   other Personnel pursuant to Texas Government Code Section
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   551.074(a)(1).
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                         COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Commissioner Alvarez
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    [unintelligible].
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: Yeah.
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                         COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: And I have--oh, I
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   have smaller feet. Smaller steps.
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                         CHAIRMAN DANIEL: The executive session is
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   now concluded. The time is 10:52. Is there any other order of
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business to come before the Commission? Do we have a motion to
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   adjourn?
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                          COMMISSIONER ALVAREZ: Chairman, I move that
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   we adjourn.
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                          COMMISSIONER DEMERSON: Second that motion.
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                          CHAIRMAN DANIEL: It has been moved and
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   seconded to adjourn, and we are adjourned. Thank you,
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   everybody.
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