

**Georgia Commission on Child Support
Economic Subcommittee Listening Session
Dr. Roger Tutterow, Chair**

**August 26, 2021
6:00 p.m.**

Dr. Roger Tutterow, Chair of the Georgia Child Support Commission's Economic Subcommittee, welcomed everyone at 6:00 p.m. and explained the purpose of both the 2022 economic study and of this evening's listening session which was to gather public comment related to the 2022 economic study. Dr. Tutterow noted that public comments are important to the Economic Subcommittee's work and that staff is working to collect them in an orderly manner. Dr. Tutterow further noted that public comments are being received verbally during two public listening sessions (this meeting being the first of the two) and in writing either via the Child Support Commission's website or by mail.

All nine members of the Economic Subcommittee were in attendance, including: Dr. Roger Tutterow, Chair, Charles "Chuck" Clay, Representative Houston Gaines, Mark Rogers, Judge Connie Williford, Ryan Bradley, Jill Massey, Jamie Rush, and Judge John Worcester. The meeting was staffed by Executive Program Manager Elaine Johnson, Staff Attorney Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez; and Program Coordinator Latoinna Lawrence. The meeting was open to the public.

Staff Attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, provided ground rules for how and when attendees would share their comments during this Zoom videoconference. The public had been asked to register to speak at this listening session and three people had done so. Those who registered in advance were called first and given 8 minutes each to speak. Two members of the public who registered to speak gave comments, but the third did not attend.

The two members of the public who had registered to speak gave comments on the following topics:

- Revisit the idea that the parent who pays child support should be based on who is designated the "custodial" or "noncustodial parent." Custody decisions should be based on the best interest of the child and not muddled by financial considerations because parenting time gets linked to an increase or decrease in child support amounts.
- It is hard on custodial parents to get the child support that is needed. The process should be easier in general. The process to get a case transferred between counties is troublesome.

Dr. Tutterow allowed anyone in attendance, even if they had not registered, an opportunity to speak. He announced that anyone attending could place his or her name in the chat to indicate that they wished to make a public comment. At first, no one responded to the open call to give comment. However, the Economic Subcommittee remained on the call to give ample time to see if the third pre-registered speaker would attend and to allow anyone on the call to make a comment.

Dr. Tutterow and staff reminded all attendees that in addition to the two public listening sessions being held as part of the 2022 economic study, the Child Support Commission takes public comment at the end of every full Commission meeting. The details of all Commission meetings are always posted on the Commission's website well in advance of every meeting.

Five members of the public, who had not pre-registered, gave public comment. Those comments were on the following topics:

- Imputing income is a problem because non-custodial parents are being obligated based on money, they don't earn so that the moment they leave the courtroom they are already behind on child support. A child support court order which imputed income did not give any written findings of fact as to why income was imputed.
- Non-custodial parents are not getting any pandemic-related benefits which the speaker referred to as "Biden bucks."
- Child support should be based on net income, not gross.
- Child support formulas are antiquated.
- Child support should not be based on imputed income.
- If a non-custodial parent has a child(ren) during the summer, he or she should not pay child support during those months.
- Child support amounts need to reflect what is true in real time.
- It is counterproductive to jail or suspend licenses of fathers who are in arrears on child support.
- When parenting time is equally shared, people are more likely to pay child support.
- Judges abuse discretion when they impute income because they see a party's financial affidavit and can see that a party cannot afford to appeal.
- Judicial discretion in the area of child support is excessive.
- Child support should not exceed 60% of income, but it routinely does because additional expenses outside the BCSO table are included.
- After child support is paid, a non-custodial parent cannot meet his own subsistence needs.

The Subcommittee waited until 7pm to see if the third pre-registered speaker would attend, but she did not. Staff reviewed the three ways that members of the public may provide public comments and showed some features of the Commission's website through screen sharing.

Staff is preparing a document compiling all the written and verbal public comments received. That document will be provided to the Economic Subcommittee members and will be up for discussion at the Economic Subcommittee's meeting on October 6, 2021. The compilation of all public comments will also be provided to the economist conducting the 2022 economic study.

The Economic subcommittee members simply listened to all public comments. No official actions were taken at this meeting.