

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

**June 4, 2021  
9:00 – 10:00 a.m.**

**Meeting Minutes**

Dr. Roger Tutterow, Chair of the Economic Subcommittee, called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. Child Support Commission/Economic Subcommittee members in attendance were Dr. Roger Tutterow, Chair, Presiding Judge Anne Elizabeth Barnes, Attorney Charles “Chuck” Clay, Representative Houston Gaines, and Judge Connie Williford. Other Economic Subcommittee members in attendance were Ryan Bradley, DCSS, Attorney Jill Massey, Attorney 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.

**Welcome, Introductions, Roll Call**

The meeting was conducted as a virtual meeting using Zoom Webinar. Dr. Tutterow asked Latoinna Lawrence to conduct roll call. Ms. Lawrence explained she was using Zoom to determine the names of all individuals attending the meeting. Ms. Lawrence provided instructions for the subcommittee members on how to speak in the virtual environment during the meeting. Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez confirmed that nine of the ten members of the Economic Subcommittee were present and that a quorum to conduct business was established. Dr. Tutterow explained this was the first meeting of the subcommittee since 2018 and there were no meeting minutes to review and approve.

**Purpose and Objectives of the Economic Subcommittee**

Dr. Tutterow shared that the Economic Subcommittee is governed by Georgia statutes, OCGA §19-6-50 and OCGA §19-6-53, and by the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) at 45 CFR 302.56(e) - (h). As a result, once every four years, the statutes and regulations call for the Commission to review the child support guidelines to determine if the guidelines provide appropriate child support awards. He stated the next study will be conducted in the year 2022 and will look at issues related to the cost of raising children, labor market data, and the general state of the economy at the state and local job market level. As part of this process, we will also analyze case data from a sample, which will show us how well the guidelines perform in their application of setting child support awards. Elaine Johnson added that information on the economic study will be available on the Commission website and provide a way for the public to have a meaningful opportunity to comment on the guidelines and table, as required in the law.

**Timeline**

Dr. Tutterow explained to the subcommittee members that we will need to lay out a timeline with action items to follow as we work through the study process. He shared that he had looked over a document with Elaine that he thinks has built into it sufficient lead time to accomplish the work timely. He asked Elaine to share more details on the document and processes. Elaine shared that the document is intended as a timeline or an action plan of the tasks we will cover over the next year or more, will serve as a reminder of the tasks, and help ensure compliance with the many details set out in the code and the CFR. She pointed out that some of the action items are simply procedural work for staff. She explained that staff will continually update the document as work progresses and will report updates back to this subcommittee, and to the commission at future meetings. Dr. Tutterow asked the subcommittee members if there were any questions on the timeline document and there were none.

### **Listening Sessions for Public Comments**

Dr. Tutterow spoke about the commitment of the Georgia Child Support Commission and of its Economic Subcommittee to provide open access to the work of this subcommittee. He explained that the subcommittee will hold two listening sessions open to the public for comments so the Commission and subcommittee may solicit information from the public on issues they may have with the guidelines and the Basic Child Support Obligation (BCSO) table. The listening sessions will be held in the evening and conclude at the end of two hours, which will make it possible for up to 24 people per session (totaling 48) to speak for no more than five minutes each. He asked that after public comments are received, staff is to summarize the written comments and share them with the vendor retained to conduct the economic study so that vendor will have the influence and the thoughts of Georgia's citizens. Dr. Tutterow stated he'd like to see the listening sessions take place in late summer 2021, which will give us feedback early enough to factor the comments into the economic study. Commission member Chuck Clay asked that we hold the first listening session in the month of August. Dr. Tutterow asked Elaine Johnson to confirm that we will conduct the listening sessions in the summer months. Ms. Johnson stated that August 2021 would probably be as early as we could conduct the first listening session in order to allow people the chance to know about the public comments opportunity. She explained further that there will be options to select from for public comments, which will include an opportunity to make a written statement of up to 2,500 characters or register and participate in a listening session or do both. Also, each person will be able to register for a specific time slot for a listening session within each two-hour window. She added that she and Latoinna Lawrence had already communicated with the AOC webmaster on this project. And, that we will certainly want to advertise that the Commission and subcommittee are seeking public comments. Dr. Tutterow asked if there were any comments from the subcommittee members on the public listening sessions, and there were no questions.

### **New Business**

#### **A. Case Sampling**

Dr. Tutterow addressed new business for the subcommittee on case sampling for the economic study. He explained that the Commission is required, by governing statutes, to have sampling done of courts in the state, regarding their actual child support orders. Dr. Tutterow discussed the history on the county selection process starting in 2006 on how counties were selected out of the 159 counties to ensure the counties we received information from were representative of the entire state of Georgia. Dr. Tutterow explained that he created an algorithm that would have geographic diversity across the state and looked like the state in terms of population density, because rural versus urban versus suburban could be very different and also, in terms of per capita income. He explained further that what he did was build an optimization model that chose counties for us from the 12 economic development districts in the state at that time, and then we chose one county from each district and that gave us geographic dispersion, so that the combination of the 12 counties was as close as possible to the population density and per capita income of the state of Georgia. In subsequent case samplings, we didn't want to go back to the same counties again so, we omitted counties that had been involved in previous sample collections which worked fine for a while. He added that since we are now up to our fifth run of this process, if we continue to exclude the previously sampled counties, we would be omitting now 48 out of the 159 counties that had already participated. He continued stating that one of the things we saw in 2018, was that we didn't get quite as good a response rate as we would have liked. The methodology was sound and guaranteed a pretty good representative view of the state of Georgia, but with that said, Dr. Tutterow recommended that this time we only exclude the counties that participated in the 2018 case sampling from the sampling that will be conducted in 2022. With those counties back in the mix we can run the algorithm

again, working on different data for per capita income, different data for population density, and the result will be a different mix of counties. He asked the subcommittee members if this seemed to be a reasonable adjustment to the methodology? The collective response from the subcommittee members was “yes.”

### **B. Economic Study Vendor**

Dr. Tutterow stated that our next piece of new business was to talk about the economic study. He shared that at the previous full Commission meeting he had spoken about contracting with Dr. Jane Venohr, from the Center for Policy Research, Inc., Denver, Colorado, who is nationally recognized as an expert in this area and who has prepared study reports for us in the past. He added that it was his understanding that the Commission did not have to publicly bid the work for this study. He asked Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez to report on an inquiry she made with the state Department of Administrative Services (DOAS), who are experts on government contracting. Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez confirmed that our selection and hiring of the economic expert is not subject to public bidding requirements and that it is up to this subcommittee and ultimately the Commission itself to make the selection. Dr. Tutterow thanked Noelle for making this inquiry.

Dr. Tutterow asked Elaine Johnson if we have funds to pay for the study. She replied that funds have been approved for the cost of the study as part of the Child Support Collaborative 2022 budget that begins on October 1, 2021. The cost estimate is \$45,000 for the study and an additional \$15,000 to pay for the new Betson-Rothbarth study, totaling \$60,000. Ms. Johnson explained that the contract with Dr. Venohr’s company will be prepared by and entered through the Judicial Council, Administrative Office of the Courts, and will include the deliverables for the study. Dr. Tutterow explained that with this next study we will include the updated Betson-Rothbarth study. He added that in updating the tables we will hopefully bring the numbers in line and resolve some of the concerns individuals have had in the past about the current Basic Child Support Obligation (BCSO) table. He stated he is confident we're going to come out with a product that is fair to the interest of families throughout Georgia.

Dr. Tutterow noted that we didn't necessarily plan to have any action items today but asked if the subcommittee wanted to entertain a motion to recommend that Dr. Venohr conduct the study. Commission member Chuck Clay made a motion to retain Dr. Venohr and her company as the preferred provider for the analysis and for the economic study report. Commission member Presiding Judge Anne Elizabeth Barnes seconded the motion. The motion was carried and unanimously approved by the subcommittee.

### **Objectives for Next Meeting, Schedule Next Meeting, and Adjournment**

Dr. Tutterow shared that he was not sure we needed to schedule the next meeting of this subcommittee at this time, and asked Elaine when Judge Michael Key, Chair of the Commission, had set the next meeting of the full Commission. Elaine responded that Judge Key had indicated to set the next meeting in the early fall of this year. Elaine offered that she and Noelle could speak with Judge Key on setting another Commission meeting for the purpose of addressing the motion and recommendation from this subcommittee to contract with Dr. Jane Venohr for the economic study. Dr. Tutterow agreed with this plan. He stated that as to next steps for the subcommittee, he wants to allow staff to solicit preferences on dates for the listening sessions, perhaps have a quick call of this subcommittee to set the listening session dates, discussions today included how we will make our recommendation to the Commission for a vendor to conduct the economic study, and how we will pull the case sampling. Dr. Tutterow asked the subcommittee members if they wanted to meet again once there is more clarity regarding the next meeting of the Commission, and the subcommittee members agreed.

Elaine Johnson introduced a new member of the Child Support Commission, Judge Connie Williford to the subcommittee. Judge Williford is a Superior Court Judge in the Macon Judicial Circuit. Elaine had recommended to Dr. Tutterow that Judge Williford be added to the Economic Subcommittee, which he agreed to. Judge Williford welcomed the opportunity to join this subcommittee. As a result, Elaine will communicate with Judge Key, Commission Chair, on adding Judge Williford as a member of this subcommittee.

Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez stated there was a request in the chat asking for where the public may view the prior economic study reports. Noelle stated she placed a link in the chat for the Commission website and the reports. (<https://csc.georgiacourts.gov/business-of-the-child-support-commission/>)

Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez stated there was a comment in the chat asking if a soft copy of the “action plan” created by staff was available for the public. She explained that the document is an internal working document, sort of a three-person staff to do list. There was discussion by the subcommittee on whether or not they should authorize that the action plan be placed on the website for the public to view. This document will reflect the work of the staff and the subcommittee to show that deadlines are being completed for the 2022 study in a timely manner. It was suggested that the document could be posted monthly or quarterly, or it could be posted just once. Dr. Tutterow recommended the staff post the document as it exists now. Subcommittee member Ryan Bradley recommended that a footnote or a disclaimer be added to the document to indicate that nothing in the document is binding and is subject to change.

The Economic Subcommittee meeting was adjourned by Dr. Tutterow at 9:41 a.m.