

**Georgia Commission on Child Support
Statute Review Subcommittee
Kathleen “Katie” Connell, Esq., Co-Chair
Hon. Connie Williford, Co-Chair
Friday, July 15, 2022
10:00 a.m.**

Meeting Summary

The Statute Review Subcommittee (“Subcommittee”) of the Georgia Commission on Child Support (“Commission”) met via videoconferencing using Zoom webinar. Ten (10) of the fourteen (14) Subcommittee members attended. Study Committee members in attendance were:

Katie Connell, Co-Chair	Hon. Connie Williford, Co-Chair	Hon. Lisa Colbert
Hon. Emory Palmer	Regina Quick, Esq.	Christina Scott, J.D.
Mara Block, Esq.	Jason Naunas, Esq.	Hon. Amanda Petty
Charles Spinardi, Esq. as designee of Byron Cuthbert		

Executive Program Manager, Elaine Johnson, Staff Attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, and Program Coordinator, Latoinna Lawrence, served as staff for the meeting. Ten (10) guests, including Legislative Counsel, Holly Carter, and members of the public attended this open meeting.

Co-Chair Connell opened the meeting, welcoming all and noting that the last time this Subcommittee met was on November 16, 2018, in anticipation of the 2019 legislative session. Staff member, Latoinna Lawrence, reviewed procedural rules for this virtual meeting. At the beginning of the meeting, Staff attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, noted that quorum had not yet been reached, but a few minutes later confirmed that a quorum of Subcommittee members had been achieved. There were no previous minutes for review during this meeting. The minutes from this Subcommittee’s last meeting, held on November 16, 2018, were approved by e-vote and are posted on the Commission’s website.

Co-Chair Connell introduced her new co-Chair, Judge Connie L. Williford of the Superior Court for the Macon Judicial Circuit, noting that Judge Williford will specifically lead the work on the parenting time deviation. Judge Williford was on the bench during this meeting and had to excuse herself with the hopes of returning before the meeting ended.

The Subcommittee took up the work of the Low-Income Deviation Study Committee, hearing a report from that Study Committee’s chair, Judge Emory Palmer. Judge Palmer’s report touched on the topic of the 2022 Economic Study and Chair Connell called on staff to give an explanation and update on the 2022 Economic Study especially for the benefit of the many new members of this Subcommittee. Judge Palmer noted that much of the Low-Income Deviation Study Committee’s recommendations call to await the final report from the economist conducting the 2022 Economic Study which is due on September 30, 2022. One recommendation from the

Low-Income Deviation Study Committee was to investigate improving the ease-of-use of that deviation as it functions in Georgia's child support calculator. Executive Program Manager, Elaine Johnson, noted that a work group had been formed to address that issue and gave a report on the results of that work group, noting that its recommendations will be discussed by the Commission's Technology and Calculator Subcommittee at a meeting on August 3, 2022.

Next, the Subcommittee had a discussion around amending the law on adjusting a parent's income based on a preexisting child support order. Specifically at issue was whether the child support guidelines statute should be amended so that when a child support order is being established or modified, the judge may consider all child support orders obligating a parent—not just those that pre-date the initial order in the current case—and whether judges may consider preexisting child support amounts that have been ordered, but that are not being paid. Subcommittee member, Regina Quick, suggested that this discussion is mooted by O.C.G.A. 19-11-12 (f). Subcommittee member, Mara Block, spoke in favor of the specificity of the adjustment as it currently stands and noted the ability of the judge to grant a deviation, if needed. Chair Connell asked for input from the judges on this Subcommittee. Neither Judge Palmer nor Judge Petty think that amending this adjustment is needed at this time. Chair Connell noted that the Subcommittee would not take up this issue any further at this time.

Staff attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, gave a report on the status of the LIFE Act, formerly the "Heartbeat Bill" in light of a recent U.S. Supreme Court decision and a case pending in the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals, and explained the LIFE Act's impact on Georgia's Child Support Guidelines Statute, O.C.G.A. 19-6-15. Chair Connell noted that the Subcommittee will keep this development on its radar and reconsider it once the 11th Circuit has issued its ruling.

Executive Program Manager, Elaine Johnson, spoke on the issue of handling extraordinary expenses outside of the child support calculator. Subcommittee members including mediators, judges, and attorneys all agreed that they routinely see this done.

Co-Chair Connell, who previously served as the Chair of the Parenting Time Deviation Study Committee, gave a report on the work of that Study Committee, and presented the major findings of its Final Report. Co-Chair Williford was unavailable to lead any further discussion on this topic due to her conflicting court schedule.

Co-Chair Connell noted that the next three meeting dates have been set as follows: Monday, August 22; Thursday, September 22; and Friday, October 21, all starting at 10 a.m., and the meeting was adjourned.