

Georgia Child Support Commission
Commission Meeting
Judge R. Michael Key, Chair
Friday, August 11, 2023
10:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m.

Meeting Summary

The Georgia Child Support Commission (“Commission”) held a hybrid meeting, taking place at the Nathan Deal Judicial Center in Atlanta and via Zoom Webinar. Ten (10) Commission members attended. The Commission members in attendance were:

Judge R. Michael Key, Chair
Kathleen B. Connell, Esq.
Judge Emory Palmer
Judge Connie L. Williford

Chuck Clay, Esq.
Rep. Houston Gaines
Sen. Brian Strickland

Judge Lisa Colbert
Judge Benjamin Land
Dr. Roger Tutterow

Executive Program Manager, Elaine Johnson, Staff Attorney, Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez, and Program Coordinator, Latoinna Lawrence, served as staff for this meeting. Several subject matter experts on government benefit programs and members of the public also attended this open meeting, some in person and some by Zoom.

Chair Key opened the meeting at 10:00 a.m., welcoming all. Introductions were made of those attending online and in person. Judge Benjamin Land of the Georgia Court of Appeals was sworn in as a new Commission member by Chair Key. Latoinna Lawrence reviewed procedures for efficient handling of this hybrid meeting.

Chair Key noted that minutes from the May 2, 2023, Commission meeting had been previously distributed to all members. No corrections to those minutes were requested and they were unanimously approved.

Dr. Roger Tutterow reported on the work of the Economic Subcommittee. That subcommittee asked the Commission to recommend an updated Basic Child Support Obligation Table (“BCSO Table”) to the Georgia General Assembly. Specifically, the Economic Subcommittee asked the Commission to recommend that the Georgia General Assembly adopt the “A.1: Updated Using Rothbarth” BCSO Table developed by Dr. Jane Venohr dated August 8, 2022. That proposed BCSO Table employs the Rothbarth methodology, which is the most commonly used methodology in the United States (as of August 2022, 32 states employed the Rothbarth methodology). That proposed BCSO Table will also calculate BCSO amounts for parents with a combined gross income of up to \$40,000 monthly, up from the previous amount of \$30,000. Chuck Clay moved to approve the Economic Subcommittee’s recommendation as discussed above. That motion was seconded by Judge Emory Palmer and passed unanimously with no abstentions.

Judge Connie Williford discussed the work of the Statute Review Subcommittee, which continues to work with Dr. Jane Venohr and is making good progress on possible alternatives to the parenting time and low-income deviations. The Subcommittee anticipates making recommendations to the full Commission on those topics at the next full Commission meeting.

Elaine Johnson spoke briefly on the Technology and Calculator Subcommittee. The calculator continues to run very smoothly. The AOC's IT department continues to monitor the calculator for security issues very carefully. Staff continues to consider ways to improve and simply the Child Support Calculator.

Judge Key led a discussion on proposing legislation during the 2024 legislative session. Judge Key noted that, at a minimum, legislation will be needed to propose the adoption of the updated BCSO Table and potentially for other issues such as changes to the parenting time and low-income deviations. Judge Key asked for a motion to request that the Commission's legislative members authorize Legislative Counsel, Holly Carter, to draft the Commission's proposed legislation for the 2024 legislative session. Chuck Clay so moved, Roger Tutterow seconded that motion and it passed unanimously with no abstentions. Senator Strickland volunteered to authorize Holly Carter to work with the Commission to draft proposed legislation for the 2024 legislative session.

The Commission heard extensive comment on House Bill 499 which was filed during the 2023 legislative session. Noelle Lagueux-Alvarez offered a brief background of that bill noting that it proposed to extend the duration of child support beyond the age of majority if a child were deemed disabled. Ms. Lagueux-Alvarez also noted that Commission staff had been contacted by Legal Aid attorneys expressing grave concerns about HB-499, especially on low-income families, and that staff felt duty-bound to raise those concerns to the Commission. Elaine Johnson continued the discussion noting that, as a result of inquiries to the Commission, staff began to explore potential impacts of HB 499 and collaborated with DCSS to identify subject matter experts on that topic. Representatives from the Social Security Administration, Medicaid, SNAP and TANF all spoke on the potential impact child support payments could have on eligibility for those respective programs. A former Legal Aid attorney and current family law practitioner also spoke on possible impacts of HB 499 and the topic prompted public comment from some attendees.

Judge Key opened a public comment period allowing each speaker 3 minutes to address any of their concerns. Members of the public spoke, in person and via Zoom, on different topics and offered their various opinions.

The next Commission meeting will be a hybrid meeting that will take place on November 17, 2023, at 10:00 a.m. at the Nathan Deal Judicial Center in Atlanta and via Zoom.

This meeting adjourned at 12:06 p.m.