**MINUTES OF THE MEETING**

**Achieving a Better Life Experience Program Committee**

Wednesday, March 17at 10:30 am

Victory Building Conference Room, Suite 275 -- Little Rock, AR 72201

A meeting of the Arkansas Achieving a Better Life Experience Program Committee (“Committee”) was held on Wednesday, March 17th at 10:30 am in the Victory Building Conference Room, Suite 275 and via Zoom virtual meeting. Present at the meeting were Grant Wallace, Chief Deputy Treasurer (Designee for Treasurer of State); Joseph Baxter, Commissioner, Arkansas Rehabilitation Services; Kristie Hayes, Program Administrator, Arkansas Department of Human Services (Designee for the Secretary of Arkansas Department of Human Services); Dawn Roach, Senior Client Relationship Manager, Ascensus; Fran Jansen, Director of 529 Programs and Financial Education; and Chris Scott, Manager, Arkansas 529 Programs.

The press was notified in compliance with the Freedom of Information Act.

Grant Wallace called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m.

Grant presented the minutes of the November 5, 2020 meeting. Joseph Baxter made a motion to approve the minutes, Kristi Hayes seconded the motion, and the minutes were approved by a voice vote.

Fran Jansen began her Director’s Report by reporting on a virtual presentation she made to families served by the Arkansas Autism Resource Outreach Center. About 15 attendees were in attendance. She also reported that a virtual presentation was made to the Arkansas Down Syndrome Association with 12 persons attending. Fran noted that our office is continuing to reach out to other organizations. She also mentioned that AR ABLE will be a sponsor of the Developmental Disability Providers Association in May, with 68 non-profit community programs represented and 175 to 200 people expected to attend.

Next, Grant provided a legislative update, informing the committee that HB1684 had been filed with Representative Mayberry and Senator Mark Johnson . He explained that the bill corrects technical language to remove 529 language and add a carry-forward provision similar to that of the 529 plan. Grant stated this would allow individuals to deposit up to $15,000 (the annual contribution limit to an ABLE plan) in one year and carry forward the state tax deduction for the following four years. He also explained that HB 1684 would have a provision to allow state employees to set up automatic payroll deductions for an ABLE account.

Dawn Roach reported on the AR ABLE plan’s accounts, contributions, and withdrawals. She noted that there were less account closures in Q1 of 2021 to date than there were in Q1 of 2020. Dawn mentioned that in 2020, the plan received $1.12 million in contributions and withdrawals of almost $340,000. She noted that nearly 50% of funded accounts have been opened by a parent or guardian, and 36% by the eligible individual. Dawn concluded by providing a breakdown of assets by account type, eligibility qualifications, and disability type.

As the last order of business, Fran shared a potential date for the next meeting of Thursday, June 10th.

There being no further business, Grant moved to adjourn the meeting and the meeting adjourned at 10:36 a.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Fran Jansen, Director of 529 Programs and Financial Education