

INTERIM JOINT COMMITTEE ON TOURISM, SMALL BUSINESS, AND INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

Minutes of the 5th Meeting of the 2022 Interim

October 27, 2022

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 5th meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Tourism, Small Business, and Information Technology was held on Thursday, October 27, 2022, at 1:00 PM, in Room 149 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Phillip Pratt, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representatives Kim King, Co-Chair, and Phillip Pratt, Co-Chair; Senators Alice Forgy Kerr, Adrienne Southworth, Phillip Wheeler, and Mike Wilson; Representatives Shane Baker, Lynn Bechler, Josh Branscum, George Brown Jr., Josh Calloway, Jeffery Donohue, Ryan Dotson, Daniel Fister, Deanna Frazier Gordon, Chris Freeland, Chris Fugate, David Hale, Thomas Huff, Norma Kirk-McCormick, William Lawrence, Ruth Ann Palumbo, Michael Sarge Pollock, Josie Raymond, Brandon Reed, Rachel Roberts, Cherlynn Stevenson, Ashley Tackett Laferty, Nancy Tate, Timmy Truett, Bill Wesley, and Richard White.

Guests: Curtis Hansen, Broadband Program Manager, Appalachian Regional Commission; Brian Gupton, CEO, Dataseam; Damian Johnson, Superintendent, Jenkins Independent Schools; and Representative Giovanni Capriglione, State Representative, District 98, Texas House of Representatives.

LRC Staff: Janine Coy, Kirk Smith, Crystal Thompson, and Sasche Allen.

Approval of Minutes

A motion to approve the minutes of the September 29, 2022, meeting was made by Representative Frazier Gordon, seconded by Representative Huff, and approved by voice vote.

Broadband and Device Access in Appalachia: Challenges and Opportunities

Curtis Hansen, Broadband Program Manager for the Appalachian Regional Commission, gave an update on the importance of universal, high quality, and affordable broadband access, specifically in the Appalachian region. Access to adequate broadband in the Appalachian areas of the Commonwealth is well below the national average. Numerous factors affect access to broadband including county economic status and access

to computer devices. Data indicates Kentucky has a higher participation rate in the Federal Communications Commission's Affordable Connectivity Program than other areas of Appalachia. Mr. Hansen said the Appalachian Regional Commission is prepared to aid in helping repair some of the disparities and increase access to broadband for the citizens of the eastern portion of the state.

Brian Gupton, CEO of Dataseam, discussed the significant challenges that exist in the Appalachian Regional Commission's 13 state service area, and explained how a lack of access to broadband and computer devices impede economic growth. To combat these challenges, Dataseam created an U.S. Department of Labor approved registered apprenticeship program in information technology to serve high school juniors and seniors. The competency-based program will provide high school students with industry standard training and certification and create sustainable pipelines of individuals into the information technology sector. Damian Johnson, Superintendent of Jenkins Independent Schools, testified about his school district's experience with Dataseam's registered apprenticeship program.

Representative Kirk-McCormick commended Mr. Johnson for his leadership and dedication to Jenkins Independent schools.

Responding to Senator Southworth, Mr. Gupton explained the funding sources for Dataseam's registered apprenticeship program.

Answering questions from Representative Pratt, Mr. Johnson described the various types of devices used by students of Jenkins Independent Schools.

Texas: Investment in IT Improvement and Modernization Projects

Texas Representative Giovanni Capriglione discussed his state's approach to updating legacy information technology systems of state agencies. The Texas Legislature passed House Bill 4018 in 2021 to improve long term planning and coordination for state agency information technology, establish a fund in the state treasury to be used for improving and modernizing state agency information resources, and create the Joint Oversight Committee on Investment in Information Technology Improvement and Modernization Projects. In addition, each state agency in the executive and legislative branches of Texas state government, shall prepare an agency-wide plan outlining how the agency intends to transition its information technology and data-related services into a more modern, integrated, secure, and effective technological environment. These planning reports must be submitted to the Texas Department of Information Resources, the Joint Oversight Committee on Investment in Information Technology Improvement and Modernization Projects, and various standing committees of the Texas Senate and House of Representatives.

In response to questions from Representative King, Representative Capriglione explained there are advantages and disadvantages to both prefabricated technology systems and customized technology systems depending on the needs of the specific state agency. He said the planning reports previously discussed are in the process of being completed and prioritization of the modernization projects along with funding allotments will begin in the next two to three months.

Addressing questions from Senator Southworth, Representative Capriglione stated that the Joint Oversight Committee on Investment in Information Technology Improvement and Modernization Projects is comprised of legislative members, and the committee consults with the Texas Department of Information Resources and other state agencies and experts. Although there was a fund established to be used for improving and modernizing state agency information resources, Representative Capriglione indicated that the more involved projects must obtain funding from general revenue related funds.

Replying to questions from Representative Pratt, Representative Capriglione discussed cybersecurity, data breaches, prefabricated technology systems, and customized technology systems.

There being no further business before the committee, the meeting adjourned at 1:55 p.m.