

<b>Location</b>	Association of Washington Businesses (AWB) - 1414 Cherry St SE   Olympia, WA
<b>Time</b>	10:30 a.m. – 12:30 p.m.
<b>Attendees</b>	Department Representative: Carla Reyes, Paid Family and Medical Leave Director Employee's Interests Representative: Marilyn Watkins Employer's Interests Representative: Bob Battles Employer's Interests Representative: Christine Brewer Employer's Interests Representative: Tammie Hetrick (Phone) Employer's Interests Representative: Julia Gorton Paid Family and Medical Leave Act Ombudsman: Edsonya Charles
<b>Guests</b>	PFML Budget Manager: Xia Zhan PFML Product Owner: Matt Buelow PFML Communications Manager: Clare DeLong Lily Smith: WA House of Representatives Zach Laudchl: LHA
<b>Members Absent</b>	Employee's Interests Representative: Joe Kendo Employee's Interests Representative: Maggie Humphreys Employee's Interests Representative: Samantha Grad
<b>Scribe</b>	Liz Merrick

## Welcome and Introductions: Carla Reyes

- June 2019 meeting minutes were sent out electronically ahead of today's meeting and will be reviewed by members to be approved electronically. Requesting final approval by July 31<sup>st</sup>.

## Launch Update – Matt Buelow

Matt provided an update around the Q1 and Q2 wage reporting, reminding Advisory Committee the deadline for these reporting periods was extended to August 31, 2019. Refer to presentation for the data covered. He clarified the data does not reflect the total number of employers who have filed. The Department will be looking at the total number employers reported, and total premiums assessed will be provided at the next meeting, and monthly thereafter. After each quarter the Department can report the funds to check for solvency.

Matt highlighted the average wait time has risen from 6 minutes to 9 minutes (from 1<sup>st</sup> week of reporting to the third week of reporting). Staff is currently researching as to why our call length has grown and if it's a possible learning curve for staff or callers. As of this point, we are not aware of anyone who has received a busy signal and were not able to get into the phone queue. The Department will include an agenda item to provide an update on the most commonly asked questions, and the Departments approach to mitigate wait times (e.g. "how to file" Webinar, video or training, triage calls).

Matt shared small employers are currently not able to voluntarily pay the optional employer portion of the premiums as the system is not yet designed to calculate this optional premium for businesses under 50 employers. This was a lower priority development as there is a lead time required to access small business grants, PFML intends to allow the employer to opt-in retroactively, should they choose to do so. Elective Coverage for self-employed will be available August 1, with the choice to opt-in retroactively.

Carla reported there are very few high and critical severity bugs logged and attributes this to the Beta launch approach. Bob congratulated the team on the successful launch and will be curious to hear about the customer experience and updates on the types of calls.

**Action - John Mattes:** to provide an update on the Customer experience with the Q1 and Q2 reporting and call statistics at the next Advisory Committee meeting.

Edsonya reported this is the first month the OBMUDS office has received complaints. The three calls were about wait times, technical questions, someone who believes they should not have to pay premiums.

## Communications update: Clare DeLong

Clare provided statistics around the launch (see presentation materials). She noted the communications distribution list is much larger than actual employers as the Department wanted to be more inclusive in their communications. The largest interest is on the "overview" video (~17,000 views). The peak website traffic was seen employers began withholding in January 2019.

The Focus group findings will be shared next month's meeting (August 15<sup>th</sup>), and data will be sent to Advisory Committee in advance. Other activities to watch for:

- Animated video for employers to share with employees coming in early September. Thanks to Moms Rising and AWB for use of their videos.
- Creative concepts will also be shared in September.

**Action - Clare:** provide Bob any customer feedback received during the focus groups on the AWB video.

## Budget Update – Xia Zhan

Xia highlighted on June 28, 2019, our loan was paid back. She also walked through the supplied budget materials.

- Small Business Assistance grants were pulled out of the Administrative cost line and added as their own benefit cost related line item
- Advisory determined it is not necessary to isolate / report on the Voluntary Plan Applications fees.

The PFML Operating Budget is a reflection of the administrative costs.

## Benefits Planning – Development Timeline

Matt reviewed the features that are needed to apply for benefits, which is what the Department intends to deliver for the January 2020 timeline. There are additional features and enhancements that will continue to be added to the system. The Project officially ends June 30, 2020.

Marilyn would like to ensure the application process is simple and easy to use for the employees, as she expects they are under high stress situations when they apply for benefits. Advisory Committee wants to see the vision of the application process.

Matt shared, through a WATech contract, we are doing usability testing in order to incorporate the findings into the development work. Matt offered to bring forward a demo when available. Marilyn offered to reach out to her partners if we need testers during usability sessions.

**Action - Matt:** System Demo (around application process) for future Advisory Committee meeting.

Carla and Bob initiated the group's brainstorm on ways to get early employee feedback (similar to the Beta) prior to January 1<sup>st</sup>. One idea is to allow the employee to create their Benefit Account in advance of the qualifying event (situations: expecting a baby, or scheduled surgery). Other opportunities include:

- Mock ups on system design.
- Focus groups, testing on terminology for users that would be easy to understand.

## For the Good of the Order

>>Advisory Committee requested an update on the alternate ways for reporting (e.g. paper filing). Matt referenced the information provided at the June meeting, and his commitment to come back with the data the Customer Care Team is collecting to inform a decision on which alternate method(s) to offer. The Advisory Committee is very interested in the decision and would like there to be more ways than electronic wage filing. Acknowledged WorkSource offices are one avenue to provide either employers / employees access to a computer for filing and phone to contact PFML.

**Pending Action for Matt:** follow up discussion around alternate ways for wage reporting.

>>August 15th date conflicts with Overtime Law meeting - some members may not be in attendance.

>>Bob Battles voiced a concern about conflict with PFML benefits and employer's private short-term disability plans that companies provide to employees, and messages received from employers about the approval of their plans from the Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). April Amundson, PFML Policy Manager (who was on the phone) provided clarification about this confusion. She met with OIC on 7/24. OIC interpreted RCW 50A.04.240 to mean that employees who are eligible to receive short-term disability, even a privately-owned plan, were not eligible for PFML benefits. Policy clarified to the OIC that our law was applicable to 'state disability insurance laws' not to privately owned disability plans. The OIC was satisfied with PFML interpretation. The OIC committed to follow up with the employers and those whose privately owned disability plans were pending approval.

Bob requested information about this decision that he could share with his members.

**Action - April:** forward information that can be shared regarding the OIC response or develop a joint statement that Advisory Committee can share with their members to clarify the confusion.

>>Marilyn asked how will employers know how much to top off? Discussed whether the Department would be able to provide the employee actual benefit estimation, or whether this is something the employer/employee discuss.

>>Carla shared feedback from a customer (staff accountant). Feedback has been sent to Matt as the Product Owner for action in system development.

Next meeting: August 15, 2019 - 9:30-11:30

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