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**DDSN COMMISSIONERS ANNOUNCE 2021-2022 OFFICERS,
COMMITTEES AND NEW TASKFORCES**

Columbia, S.C. (July 26, 2021) - The South Carolina Commission on Disabilities and Special Needs (the "Commission") selects officers and standing committees for the 2021-2022 fiscal year and creates several new task forces to solve emerging and long-standing issues impacting the agency. The SC Department on Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN) has authority over all the state's services and programs for South Carolinians with severe lifelong disabilities, including intellectual disabilities and related disabilities, autism, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, and similar disabilities.

During the June 17, 2021, commission meeting, Commissioner Stephanie M. Rawlinson of the 7th Congressional District was selected chair of the seven-board commission. Barry D. Malphrus, Commissioner for the 1st Congressional District was selected vice-chair, and Robin B. Blackwood, Commissioner for the 4th Congressional District, was selected as secretary.

During the July 15, 2021, commission meeting, Chairman Rawlinson appointed leadership of the standing committees according to the Commission By-Laws. Commissioner Blackwood will chair the Finance and Audit Committee, joined by Commissioners Malphrus and Eddie Miller of the 6th Congressional District. Commissioner Malphrus will chair the Policy Committee, joined by Commissioners Gary Lemel of the 5th Congressional District, and David Thomas of the 3rd Congressional District. Commissioner Miller will chair the Legislative Committee, joined by Commissioner Thomas and Commissioner Gary Kocher of the 2nd Congressional District.

The selected officers and appointed standing committees on the DDSN Commission to serve one-year terms from July to June following the DDSN Commission by-laws. Chairman Rawlinson also announced, during the July 15th commission meeting, the creation of newly created taskforces made up of DDSN staff members, commissioners, providers and key stakeholders to address and improve services provided by DDSN and address issues facing providers like staffing and training.

Five new taskforces were unanimously approved by the commission. A taskforce on Wage Equity & Parity was created and will be led by Commissioner Thomas. A taskforce to strengthen

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and improve training for employees at DDSN facilities was also created, which will be led by Commissioner Lemel. Commissioner Blackwood will direct a newly created Autism taskforce, and Chairman Rawlinson will lead a new taskforce for reform & improvement at the state's five regional intermediate care facilities (ICFs), commonly referred to as the DDSN Regional Centers.

DDSN Commission Chair Stephanie Rawlinson said, "We need real-time feedback and insights if we want to solve the bigger issues facing DDSN and work towards a stronger, more responsive agency. Our new taskforces will tackle issues proactively to solve service delivery challenges and actively work together to improve programs and services that DDSN provides to individuals we serve in SC."

The Commission of the South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs holds monthly meetings on the third Thursday of each month at 10:00 AM in Conference Room 251 at the S.C. Department of Disabilities and Special Needs Central Administrative Office, 3440 Harden Street Extension, Columbia S.C. The public is invited to speak to the commission during the public forum portion of the meetings. If members of the public want to speak, DDSN asks that you sign up to speak 30 minutes before the commission meeting.

The task forces will work collaboratively in subgroups and members of the task force are subject to change. New members may be added by the Commission as needed, and meetings of the task force groups will not be public meetings.

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About DDSN

The South Carolina Department of Disabilities and Special Needs (DDSN), as stated in Section 44-20-240 of the South Carolina Code of Laws, has authority over all the state's services and programs for South Carolinians with severe lifelong disabilities, including intellectual disabilities and related disabilities, autism, traumatic brain injury, spinal cord injury, and similar disabilities. Primary responsibilities include planning, development, and provision of a full range of services for children and adults; ensure all services and supports provided meet or exceed acceptable standards; and improve the quality of services and efficiency of operations. The department advocates for people with severe lifelong disabilities both as a group and as individuals; coordinates services with other agencies; and promotes and implements prevention activities to reduce the occurrence of both primary and secondary disabilities.

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