

Caleb Wilson Hazing Prevention Task Force

Monday, November 3, 2025

1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.

House Committee Room 5

State Capitol

900 North 3rd Street

Baton Rouge, LA 70802

CALL TO ORDER

Representative Jason Hughes called the November meeting of the Caleb Wilson Hazing Prevention Task Force to order at 1:04 p.m.

ROLL CALL & INTRODUCTIONS

Dr. Allison Smith called the roll and a quorum was established.

Members Present	Affiliation
Rep. Jason Hughes, Chair	State Representative
Rep. Joseph Stagni	State Representative
Rep. Vanessa LaFleur	State Representative
Rep. John Wyble	State Representative
Rep. Rashid Young	State Representative
Rep. Tehmi Chassion	State Representative
Sen. Gerald Boudreaux, Vice Chair	State Senator
Sen. Edward Price	State Senator
Sen. Larry Selders	State Senator
Sen. Beth Mizell (designee)	State Senator
Julie Ralph	Office of Attorney General Liz Murrill
Maj. Nicole Kilgore	Louisiana State Police
Dr. Kim Hunter Reed	Commissioner of Higher Education
Pamela Williams	Northshore Technical Community College
Brennan Belanger	Louisiana State University
Dr. Amy Cable	Louisiana Community & Technical College
Dr. Fran’Cee Brown-McClure	Louisiana State University
Dr. Winton Anderson	Southern University & A&M College
Alicia Mitchell	University of Louisiana at Monroe
Dr. Jim Carlson	Northshore Technical Community College
Johanna Posada (designee)	Louisiana State University
Corinne M. Blache, JD	Southern University System
Dr. Erica Calais	University of Louisiana System
Members Not Present	Affiliation
Rep. Delisha Boyd	State Representative

Rep. Rashid Young	State Representative
Connor Goodly	Southern University and A&M College
Nyic'Quavayion Willis	Grambling State University

Rep. Hughes thanked the Task Force for attending the September Hazing Summit and noted two recent hazing incidents. Sen. Boudreaux thanked the Board of Regents and acknowledged Caleb Wilson's family. Rep. LaFleur noted that Caleb would now have turned 21, emphasizing the importance of the Task Force's mission. Dr. Reed introduced Regent Chair Misti Cordell and praised her for her dedication to higher education. Richard Wilson, Caleb's uncle and godfather, expressed gratitude for the group's efforts. The Task Force then observed a moment of silence in Caleb's memory.

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 16, 2025, MINUTES

Rep. Hughes asked if there were any corrections to be made to the previous meeting's minutes. Hearing none, on motion of Vice Chair Boudreau and without objection, the September 16, 2025, minutes were approved.

BULLYING/HAZING PREVENTION IN LOUISIANA K-12 SCHOOLS

Mr. Tavares Walker, Executive Director of BESE, thanked the group for including K–12 education in its work and explained BESE's policymaking role for all Louisiana schools. He outlined that state law requires every school to have anti-bullying policies, enforced through BESE bulletins covering all school types. These rules mandate reporting, investigation, and parent notification within 24 hours. While districts design their own prevention programs, BESE provides guidance for consistency. Mr. Walker reported 96 bullying cases statewide in 2024–25, with no failures by school employees to act.

Rep. Hughes emphasized the distinction between bullying and hazing, noting hazing's presence in high school bands and sports, while urging for more education and prevention. Mr. Walker agreed the behaviors of bullying and hazing overlap and said state policies mirror hazing laws, focusing on prevention through local programs that address behavior and school culture. Rep. Hughes asked about annual student education on hazing risks. Mr. Faulk responded that prevention starts with training sponsors and coaches and stressing stronger oversight and accountability as hazing becomes more common in K–12 schools. Rep. Stagni emphasized that bullying excludes while hazing includes, noting that only bullying is addressed in law. He urged educating K–12 students to recognize hazing before college and recommended the Task Force promote clear education on the differences from bullying.

Dr. Janet Pope, Executive Director of the Louisiana School Boards Association, outlined the legal distinction between bullying (exclusion) and hazing (inclusion) and noted their overlap. She explained that state laws and BESE rules require all schools to enforce conduct codes and provide training on bullying, hazing, and student safety. Hazing education typically begins in upper elementary or middle school, especially in athletics. She highlighted the Louisiana Center for Safe Schools' role in reporting, training, and prevention, emphasizing behavior management, safety, and consistent compliance with state laws.

Sen. Boudreaux highlighted that bullying and hazing persist in K–12 schools despite existing laws and urged superintendents to enforce policies proactively. He called for immediate, practical actions to prevent incidents and make accountability a priority, noting that early misbehavior, if unchecked, can carry into college. Mr. Faulk emphasized the need to change school culture and ensure consistent enforcement of discipline policies. He added that students may not recognize hazing, stressing proactive K–12 education to prevent harmful behaviors from

continuing into college. He recommended partnering with educators, starting with student organization members, and gradually expanding education to all students without imposing new mandates.

Sen. Mizell asked about cases in which teachers or sponsors failed to act during group activities and whether legal consequences were applied. Dr. Pope responded that she is unaware of any failures but emphasized that adults are legally accountable for supervising minors and stressed partnering with educational stakeholders to address bullying and hazing. Mr. Faulk noted that consequences do occur, though some go unreported, and highlighted educators' responsibility to act. Sen. Mizell emphasized that hazing involves accountable adults, not just peers, and called for consistent enforcement to protect students. Sen. Price clarified that current hazing laws apply only to traditional public schools, not charter or non-public schools, while bullying regulations were later added for charters. Mr. Walker agreed that addressing hazing in these schools would require new legislation. The panel stressed early intervention in public schools to prevent harm at the secondary level.

Rep. Wyble highlighted inconsistencies in bullying and hazing laws across school types, noting reliance on local boards and administrators can cause confusion, especially around hazing definitions. He questioned whether the Safe Schools Committee addresses behavioral issues or only physical safety. Mr. Faulk clarified that the Committee focuses on security, while Dr. Pope noted students can report concerns anonymously and districts are updating policies. Rep. Wyble emphasized early intervention and fostering positive relationships, asking what legislation can do to prevent tragedies. Dr. Pope stressed that training, transparency, accountability, and clear consequences, guided by data, are essential in K–12 schools.

Sen. Boudreaux thanked attendees for their engagement and review of previous meetings, asked them to provide written recommendations of actions that can be implemented, with or without legislation, and noted that follow-up and additional questions may occur.

HAZING PREVENTION IN THE NATIONAL K–12 ARENA

Sen. Boudreaux introduced Dr. Patrick Biddix, who highlighted that hazing often begins before middle school and affects about 47% of students before college. He explained that hazing, whether psychological, emotional, or physical, can occur across all demographics and organizations, can occur without consent, and adult awareness often signals implicit approval. He added that effective prevention requires leadership training, skill-building, ethical decision-making, and adult education starting in middle school. Dr. Biddix emphasized early intervention, shared a personal example from Boy Scouts of America, and raised questions about holding organizations accountable for off-campus or unsanctioned hazing.

Rep. Stagni asked if U.S. policies hold fraternities accountable for unsanctioned events. Dr. Biddix explained there is no direct law; cases are usually addressed at the individual, campus, then organizational level. Rep. Stagni stressed the need for accountability for fraternities, including alumni who return to haze. Dr. Biddix noted not all fraternities are responsible and hazing is part of a broader issue. Rep. Stagni emphasized combining education with measures to hold returning alumni accountable for hazing-related student deaths.

Dr. Reed noted the prior comment, that high school hazing often predicts college hazing, though many students fail to recognize it. She emphasized the need for education to change the culture, define hazing clearly, and teach alternatives for healthy group bonding. Social media and hazing expectations also influence behavior, requiring consistent education from middle school

through college. Dr. Biddix highlighted that this expectation of hazing, described by Expectancy Theory in higher education, makes early education on healthy bonding crucial.

Rep. Hughes thanked Dr. Biddix for his time and information.

UPDATE ON NATIONAL EVIDENTIARY STANDARDS OF STUDENT DISCIPLINARY HEARINGS

Sen. Boudreaux introduced Task Force member Ms. Julie Ralph, Assistant Attorney General, to provide a comparison of national evidentiary standards related to incidents of hazing. Ms. Ralph noted that Louisiana is the only state to raise the evidentiary standard for public colleges from “preponderance of the evidence” to “clear and convincing” under Act 416. Private Louisiana schools still use the lower standard. Only a few other institutions, such as Cornell University, Coastal Carolina University, the University of Pennsylvania, and the University of Wisconsin System, have raised their internal standards, while most institutions continue using the preponderance of the evidence standard.

Rep. Hughes thanked Ms. Ralph for her information.

UPDATE ON STUDENT DISCIPLINARY OUTCOMES

Rep. Hughes introduced Dr. Amy Cable, who explained that LCTCS handles suspensions (temporary) and expulsions (permanent) according to system-wide policies on safety, hazing, and student conduct. Decisions are based on consideration of violation severity, prior history, and campus safety, with each college managing hearings and aligning policies with handbooks. Student organizations generally have codes of conduct but few specific hazing policies, and disciplinary actions are handled internally, independent of national membership. Dr.

Cable emphasized fairness, transparency, and individualized sanctions. Dr. Jim Carlson noted that commuter students at NTCC have fewer hazing opportunities, but the college promotes proactive education for future responsibilities. Sen. Price asked if an expelled student from one LCTCS school can attend another. Dr. Cable explained that disciplinary holds are system-wide; the student's application is put on hold, and a Chief Student Affairs or academic officer reviews the expulsion before deciding on enrollment.

Rep. Hughes introduced Dr. Fran'Cee Brown-McClure, who explained that LSU chapter closures typically last at least four years to allow prior members to graduate. Returning chapters must collaborate with the Dean's Office and their national organization, complete an application process, and have trained advisors or consultants to support a healthy campus culture. She clarified that suspension is temporary and expulsion is permanent, and noted that a rubric guides any responses to repeated violations, which can lead to permanent removal. She noted that most returning chapters retain their original designation. Rep. LaFleur asked whether individuals involved in prior incidents could remain associated with a chapter after a four-year closure. Dr. McClure explained that it is difficult to track individuals beyond enrollment status, and the university can only reliably monitor if they remain enrolled at LSU, including in professional programs.

Rep. Hughes introduced Ms. Corinne Blache, who explained that Southern University hearing panels decide between suspension, which is temporary with the charter remaining intact, and expulsion, which is permanent with the charter revoked; the specific sanction is based on actions, harm, and prior misconduct. The university is updating its non-academic disciplinary policy to clarify sanctions for system-wide approval. Rep. Hughes asked about expelled chapters returning under a new charter; Ms. Blache said there is no absolute certainty. . Rep. Hughes

stressed that after Caleb Wilson's death, Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc. should never return to Southern University and urged safeguards or legislation to ensure a permanent ban. Rep. LaFleur called for a clear definition of "organization" and suggested that institutional hearing panels determining hazing consequences be composed only of adults and not students.

Rep. Hughes introduced Dr. Alicia Mitchell, who explained that suspension and expulsion decisions at ULM are based on offense severity, intent, organizational involvement, legal violations, and prior conduct history and made by conduct officers, judicial committees, or hearing boards. Dr. Erica Calais stated that the UL System prevents expelled students from enrolling at other system institutions and oversees organizational reinstatement, requiring a full-term wait, written request, sanction board appearance, and senior administrator review.

Dr. Winton Anderson from Southern University stated that cultural differences between historically Black and predominantly White organizations complicate policies on chapter closures and reinstatements. He emphasized the need for legislation and policy to account for these nuances, such as distinctions between chapter names, charters, and organizational designations, to ensure consistency and fairness across all organizations.

Dr. Reed acknowledged Rep. Hughes's concerns and committed to gathering information from all higher education systems related to who determines whether an expelled organization can return, the decision-making process, and the role of senior administrators or boards. She also agreed to research any historical cases of expelled organizations returning, including how and after what length of time, and to provide this information within two weeks. Rep. Hughes stated that expulsion should signify the most severe misconduct and therefore be permanent, with no path for an organization to return. He suggested that if reinstatement is determined to be possible,

suspension, not expulsion, should be used instead, emphasizing the need for clear, permanent consequences for egregious acts.

Rep. Hughes thanked the participants for their information.

DISCUSSION OF EMERGING LEGISLATIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

Rep. Hughes introduced Dr. Allison Smith from the Board of Regents to provide input on legislative recommendations. Dr. Smith stated that these meetings have identified several key legislative and policy recommendations:

- Restoring the evidentiary standard to a clear preponderance of evidence
- Requiring annual anti-hazing training for all students
- Providing annual training for organizational advisors, faculty, and staff
- Streamlining and consolidating hazing and power-based violence reporting to reduce duplication
- Adopting amnesty policies to encourage students to seek help in emergencies without fear of punishment
- Securing ongoing funding to expand training capacity
- Enhancing penalties for noncompliance with hazing laws, including possible denial of bond funding for institutions that fail to report

Sen. Boudreaux emphasized that additional funding for hazing prevention and training should be intentional, direct, and separate from other allocations to ensure it is used solely for its intended purpose. He encouraged institutions to communicate this clearly during budget hearings. Dr. Smith agreed, stating that all systems have agreed on the need to ensure the funding is specifically allocated for its intended purpose. Rep. Hughes added another recommendation to include K-12 considerations in future discussions.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Rep. Dixon McMakin opposed reverting the evidentiary standard to preponderance of evidence, citing the clear-and-convincing standard's role in protecting students from unfair

punishment and noting its development with Title IX and university offices. Rep. Hughes acknowledged his input and expressed commitment to collaboration on statute revisions. Rep. Chassion urged addressing hazing at its roots, emphasizing culture change, honesty, and accountability within student organizations rather than relying solely on policies or hotlines.

NEXT STEPS & ADJOURNMENT

Rep. Hughes introduced Richard Wilson, Caleb Wilson's uncle, who acknowledged progress but questioned the necessity of fraternities and sororities and their financial and institutional ties to universities, suggesting these relationships may enable repeated hazing. He also noted that hazing and bullying are distinct issues. Rep. Hughes thanked the Wilson family, confirmed the Task Force's final report is due January 31, 2026, announced the next meeting on January 8, 2026, and emphasized the need for full attendance and coordination to finalize recommendations, closing with appreciation for members' transparency and collaboration.

On motion of Sen. Boudreaux, without objection, the meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m.

ADDITIONAL GUESTS
Chair Misti Cordell