



**EARLY LEARNING COALITION OF SOUTHWEST FLORIDA**  
**Amanda Gonzalez Appeal Hearing Minutes**  
**October 26, 2022**  
**1:00 pm**

**Purpose:** Review the Coalition’s decision to recoup childcare payments made by the ELC for the child of Amanda Gonzalez due to false household information submitted.

**Appeal Committee Members Present via Zoom:**

**Doug Szabo, Committee Chair.** *Attorney, Henderson, Franklin, Starnes and Holt*

**Michele King,** *Director Child Advocacy Program*

**Tara Sherrod (via Zoom),** *Director, First Baptist Preschool, Representative of Faith-Based Childcare Providers*

**Appellant (s) Present:** Amanda Gonzalez (via Zoom)

**Coalition Staff Present:** **Susan Block, CEO;** **Lugeenya Blackstock, CFO;** **Leona Adkins, Chief Quality Officer/Notary Public**

<b>Agenda Items</b>	<b>Discussion</b>	<b>Action/Assignments</b>
<b>Introductions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chairperson, Doug Szabo led introductions and opened the hearing at 1:04 pm.</li> </ul>	
<b>Review of Hearing Procedures</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chairperson reviewed the appeal hearing procedure, referring to the agenda provided to all participants.</li> <li>• Leona Adkins, Notary Public, administered the swearing in.</li> </ul>	
<b>Presentation by Early Learning Coalition Staff</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lugeenya Blackstock reviewed the background of the Coalition’s Decision to recoup funds for childcare services</li> </ul>	

<b>Presentation of Appeal by Amanda Gonzalez</b>	<p>Ms. Gonzalez presented her appeal. The key points were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• She found herself in a tough position during the pandemic when she lost her job. The father of her youngest child, Noe Velasco, bought the place where she is staying.</li> <li>• Noe Velasco does not live with her and her five children.</li> <li>• Ms. Gonzalez has five children and earns \$15/hour. She finds it difficult to afford childcare.</li> </ul>	
<b>Conclusion of Appeal Hearing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Committee considered the documentation and presentations by both the ELC and Ms. Gonzalez. There was discussion with Ms. Gonzalez about extending the deadline to submit documentation proving residency of Noe Velasco. She declined this offer.</li> </ul>	
<b>Committee Decision</b>	<p>The Committee decided to support the ELC decision as presented.</p> <p>The Committee instituted this decision based on the following rationale and specifically stated these reasons in support of its decisions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The documents presented offered information that conflicted with the verbal presentation by Ms. Gonzalez</li> <li>2. The written documents to not provide proof that Mr. Velasco doesn't reside with Ms. Gonzalez.</li> </ol>	<p>Motion to support the ELC decision made by Doug Szabo. Second by Michele King. Motion approved.</p>
<b>Adjournment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Chairperson thanked the members for their participation and adjourned the meeting at 1:34 pm.</li> </ul>	