

**Bureau of Household Goods and Services (Bureau or BHGS)
Advisory Council Meeting Minutes
In-Person and Teleconference Meeting
October 16, 2025**

**Department of Consumer Affairs
1747 North Market Blvd.
1st Floor - Ruby Room
Sacramento, CA 95834**

Attendees:

Advisory Council Members: Pascal Benyamini, Public
Burt Grimes, Industry
Tom Keepers, Industry
Dan Rhodes, Industry
Toby Taylor, Industry
Steve Weitekamp, Industry

Absent: Sara Oakley, Industry

Bureau Staff: Claire Goldstene, Deputy Bureau Chief
Chas Rifredi, Chief of Licensing and Administration
Jacqueline Castro, Licensing Manager
Kelli Williams, Administration Manager
Jacob Egger, Lab Manager
Alda Aguirre, Enforcement Chief
Travis Cooke, Supervising Special Investigator
Eileen Yap, Policy Manager
Joanne Van, Content Manager
Chris Sanchez, Policy AGPA
Avra Wallace-Schoell, Licensing AGPA

Others: Ian Gollihur, DCA Board and Bureau Relations
Suzanne Balkis, DCA Budgets
Jennifer Tompkins, DCA Budgets
Ann Salisbury, DCA Legal Affairs
Kristy Schieldge, DCA Legal Affairs

1. Welcome, Introductions, and Roll Call

Bureau Deputy Chief Claire Goldstene began the meeting at 10:00 a.m. and took roll call. Sara Oakley was absent.

Ms. Goldstene introduced Chas Rifredi who recently joined the Bureau as the Chief of Licensing and Administration and also thanked Bureau staff for their hard work juggling multiple long-term projects.

2. Public Comment on Items Not on the Agenda

There were no comments.

3. Update from Board and Bureau Relations, Department of Consumer Affairs

Ian Gollihur from the Department of Consumer Affairs (DCA) Board and Bureau Relations announced that Governor Newsom had appointed Lucia Saldivar as Deputy Director for Board and Bureau Relations and Shelly Jones as Assistant Deputy Director of Board and Bureau Relations.

Mr. Gollihur briefly noted that the next board member orientation week will be October 27, 2025 and that they are working to schedule training days for 2026.

Mr. Gollihur also shared that DCA's most recent annual report was published to the DCA website late this summer and thanked Bureau staff for their efforts and contributions on behalf of the Director.

Lastly, Mr. Gollihur noted that October is Cybersecurity Awareness Month and that DCA consistently works to raise awareness about digital security and how to stay safe online. He also provided several tips.

Deputy Bureau Chief Claire Goldstene briefly discussed Governor Newsom's proposed agency reorganization, which takes effect January 2026, and said she did not anticipate the change will affect the Bureau's day-to-day work.

4. Fiscal Update

a. Fee Study

DCA Budget Analyst Jennifer Thompkins provided a fiscal update and reviewed the fiscal year 2024-25 fund condition. She said the Bureau collected \$11.4 million in revenue and had \$12.98 million in expenditures. The fund balance is currently \$10.86 million, which equates to about 8.8 months in reserve.

Ms. Thompkins then reviewed projections for the fiscal year 2025-26 fund condition. She said the Bureau is projected to collect \$12.2 million in revenue and expend \$14.8 million. Authorized expenditures and direct draws would leave the

Bureau with a balance of \$8.2 million, which equates to about 6.5 months in reserve. Ms. Thompkins noted that the Bureau expects additional transfers in fiscal year 2025-26 from the remaining balances in the three separate funds to complete the process of fund consolidation, though the amounts could change based on unpaid or late invoices from the prior year.

Ms. Thompkins noted that personnel service costs are among the main factors driving increased expenditures, which includes general salary increases, employee compensation, and retirement rate adjustments. She also noted that increased enforcement expenditures, future legislation, and unanticipated events could place additional cost pressure on the Bureau's fund.

Deputy Chief Claire Goldstene added that the Bureau is still in the process of finalizing the fund consolidation and that approximately \$5.7 million will be transferred from the three separate funds during the current fiscal year.

Ms. Goldstene also said that the Bureau will begin writing the Sunset Report in 2026, and that a fee study will be completed as part of the report.

Council Member Comment: Steve Weitekamp expressed concerns about increasing licensing fees, noting that increased fees could prevent people from applying for a license.

Deputy Chief Claire Goldstene responded that the Bureau has already discussed this internally and does not want to create additional barriers for people trying to get a license. However, the Bureau has not increased some fees in over 10 years even as expenses have continued to increase. Ms. Goldstene also said that fee increases may not be implemented for all programs and that the results of the fee study will help guide those discussions.

Council Member Comment: Tom Keepers said he hoped there was consideration for the nature of work in the fee study and suggested that some work could be scoped differently. He also asked about opportunities for process improvements if common issues or themes are found during the fee study.

Deputy Chief Claire Goldstene said that the Bureau discusses process improvements frequently, separate from the fee study and noted that the Bureau is always looking for better ways to do things and that the fee study gives the Bureau another opportunity to focus on that.

5. Business Modernization Update

Deputy Chief Claire Goldstene announced that the Connect online complaint form was successfully launched and allows consumers to upload documentation with their complaints.

Ms. Goldstene also noted that automatic notifications were added to Connect for Household Movers for insurance and license status updates, and that email messages were improved for clarity. Improvements were also made to the portion of the Interstate Movers application related to Secretary of State registration. More automatic notifications and maintenance forms will be added in the future.

Policy Analyst Chris Sanchez reviewed the wireframe mockups for the new online renewal for Electronic Appliance Repair (EAR)/Household Furnishings and Thermal Installation (HFTI). He said staff have focused on layout, flow, and usability and that incorporating content, refining interactions, and development are the next steps.

Mr. Sanchez said the Bureau will also expand Connect to include EAR/HFTI applications and that wireframes are being reviewed for enforcement functions. The Bureau is currently having internal discussions on how to incorporate and improve enforcement processes, such as investigations, incident reports, and the issuance and payments of fines, into Connect. Mr. Sanchez also said the Bureau is exploring possibly adding a searchable thermal insulation directory.

Ms. Goldstene added that the Bureau expects to begin building the EAR/HFTI renewal forms with the Connect team in late October or early November. She said the goal is to make the EAR/HFTI renewal as easy as possible for licensees.

Council Member Comment: Steve Weitekamp asked if the Bureau will continue to cover the processing fee for credit card payments. Ms. Goldstene answered that there is an ongoing conversation about whether the Bureau can absorb the cost.

Council Member Comment: Burt Grimes asked if there would be a different page for each type of ownership. Licensing Manager Jacqueline Castro answered that the ownership type will be automatically generated from the licensee information on record and will prepopulate on the page.

Mr. Grimes asked if electronic fund transfers, like ACH or eChecks, would be an option as a form of payment. Ms. Goldstene responded that the Bureau has asked about those features but has not pursued them because of the expensive cost.

Mr. Grimes asked if the Bureau could start sending electronic newsletters to all licensees in the future. Ms. Goldstene noted that the focus for the next few months will be the website redesign but that an industry newsletter is something the Bureau would like to launch in the future.

6. Review May 8, 2025, Advisory Council Meeting Minutes

Council Member Comment: Steve Weitekamp asked if the regulations booklets have been updated yet.

Policy Manager Eileen Yap answered that the updated regulations booklets will be ready in 2026, and noted that the updated regulations are available online.

7. Administrative Program Update

Administration Manager Kelli Williams focused her presentation on Bureau staffing, one of the Bureau's top priorities.

Ms. Williams reported that three vacant positions at the Bureau were eliminated due to the 2024 Budget Act. She also noted that the two remaining textile technician positions in the Laboratory were reclassified to analyst positions because the outdated job classification did not accurately reflect the analytical duties performed. One position was filled via an internal promotion and the remaining position was filled with an external candidate.

Ms. Williams also reported that Chas Rifredi joined the Bureau in July 2025 as the Chief of Administration and Licensing; that five analyst positions were vacated in 2025 and that several of those positions are in various stages of being filled; that the bilingual special investigator position has been filled with a start date of October 31; and that the Bureau is in the final stages of filling an analyst position in Licensing.

Ms. Williams acknowledged Contract and Procurement Analyst Sue Robinson's work executing a large contract for new and replacement equipment in the Laboratory and her work combining the home furnishings and thermal insulation accreditation bodies under a single contract.

Lastly, Ms. Williams reported that the Bureau held an all-staff meeting and two potlucks since the prior Advisory Council meeting and that a Halloween-themed potluck is scheduled for October 27. Three BHGS staff members also represented the Bureau at a DCA-wide cornhole tournament in September 2025.

8. Licensing Program Update

Licensing Manager Jacqueline Castro introduced Licensing Analyst Avra Wallace-Schoell, who presented the Licensing update.

Ms. Wallace-Schoell reviewed licensing statistics and reported a small increase in EAR licenses between July and August 2025; an increase in service contract applications processing time due to a staff vacancy, which will be filled soon; and a small decrease in home furnishings and thermal insulation licenses because of business closures and delinquencies.

Ms. Wallace-Schoell reported that the Bureau issued 134 HHM licenses in fiscal year 2024-25. She said that 52 exams were administered in the fourth quarter of the fiscal year, with an 83 percent pass rate, and that 40 exams were administered in July and August 2025, with a 90 percent pass rate.

Ms. Wallace-Schoell noted an increase in HHM revenue through the quarter ending June 30, 2025, due to the busy moving season. She said that the Bureau has increased written communications to all license holders and has sent email notifications and postcards regarding outstanding quarterly reports. HHM analysts continue to assist license holders using Connect to submit their quarterly reports, though the Bureau also continues to process checks received in the mail.

Lastly, Ms. Wallace-Schoell said impending suspension notification messages regarding personal liability and property damage insurance and cargo insurance lapses were sent through Connect in September and October 2025, and that failure to meet the insurance requirements will result in license suspension. She reported that this has led to increased calls, emails, and insurance verifications for staff to handle, but it is helping the Bureau bring license holders into compliance and to protect consumers in California.

Council Member Comment: Steve Weitekamp belatedly commended Administration Manager Kelli Williams on continuing to decrease the vacancy rate at the Bureau. He said that he was very pleased to see growth in the number of HHM licenses and congratulated the Bureau for their efforts to make the application process much simpler.

9. Laboratory Update

Laboratory Manager Jacob Egger announced that Daniel Aguilera was promoted from textile technician to analyst and that Caleb Sharp was hired as an additional analyst in the Lab. They will be responsible for taking on more analytical duties when processing samples, in addition to their existing roles. Mr. Egger thanked Deputy Chief Claire Goldstene and the Administration unit for their help.

Mr. Egger reported that in September 2025, the Bureau entered into contract with Deatak Inc. to replace the burn room equipment, which broke in 2024 and created a work stoppage for 16 CFR 1633 testing. The Bureau is working with Deatak to order and install the new equipment as soon as possible. Mr. Egger thanked Contract Analyst Sue Robinson for working on this complex purchase.

Mr. Egger said that the Bureau secured its first set of online product samples, which are currently being tested, and noted that the Lab intends to frequently procure testing samples from more online marketplaces in the future.

Mr. Egger reported that the Lab consolidated its accreditation contracts to allow for bi-annual instead of annual accreditation, which will be more efficient for staff. In July 2025, the Bureau was accredited by the American Association for Laboratory Accreditation (A2LA). He also reported that the July 2025 Directory of Certified Insulation Materials was updated and posted by Lab Analyst Scott Raboy.

Council Member Comment: Steve Weitekamp thanked Jacob and his team for their work and asked if there is still danger of fires starting in people's beds.

Mr. Egger answered there will always be a concern about that happening, though improvements have lessened the flammability danger. However, he also noted that there has been an uptick in mattress testing failure rates and said that the Bureau will explore this further when mattress testing can resume.

Mr. Weitekamp asked if the uptick in failure rates was a result of mattresses and materials being manufactured outside the United States. Mr. Egger answered that that was not the case but, based on the failures in the Lab, the issues are with the quality of barrier materials and the manufacturer's quality control processes.

10. Enforcement Program Update

NOTE: The Enforcement Program update was presented after the Business Modernization update due to a court appearance Enforcement Chief Alda Aguirre was scheduled to make that day.

Enforcement Chief Alda Aguirre began with a brief overview of the Enforcement program and then introduced Supervising Special Investigator Travis Cooke to discuss the investigation highlights.

Mr. Cooke announced that the Bureau referred several cases to the Attorney General's office for license revocation and provided an update on several household mover cases sent to the Ventura County District Attorney in 2024.

Mr. Cooke said that staff from the Bureau's enforcement program continue to attend quarterly task force meetings in the South, Central, and Northern areas of California to share information and strategies with other state and local partners.

He noted several instances where special investigators were able to educate businesses regarding the Bureau and licensing requirements for their respective industries. The Bureau also worked with the Department of Transportation Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration (FMCSA) regarding several household mover cases and inspections in July 2025.

Mr. Cooke shared information about recent enforcement sweeps and stings and reported that in May 2025, the Bureau attended the Southern California Furniture and Accessory Market show in Long Beach and contacted licensed and unlicensed wholesale manufacturers to discuss HFTI regulations and requirements. In July 2025, the Bureau conducted a sweep of 42 delinquent and unlicensed EAR, HFTI, and HHM businesses in the Santa Cruz/Monterey area resulting in 16 citations with fines totaling \$6,500. In September 2025, the Bureau conducted a sweep of 46 businesses in the Fresno area, which resulted in 18 citations with fines totaling \$6,250. Another sweep focused on unlicensed household mover businesses is scheduled for October 2025.

Enforcement Chief Alda Aguirre discussed cease letters and reported that 46 cease letters were issued to business operating without a license between April 2025 and August 2025.

Ms. Aguirre then discussed the BHGS Collections Program and reported that 102 notices were sent to businesses who had not paid their citation fines between October 2024 and March 2025. Seven of these businesses were referred to the Franchise Tax Board for collections. Between April 2025 and August 2025, 181 notices were sent to businesses who had not paid their citations, and 67 business were referred to collections. Ms. Aguirre reported that the Bureau Collections Program collected \$15,820 in unpaid fines as of September 2025. Ms. Aguirre also reported on several recent consumer/business assistance cases and announced that the Bureau's work resulted in more than \$23,700 in savings to the public.

Ms. Aguirre reviewed statistics regarding complaints, investigations, and citations. Ms. Aguirre reported an increase in EAR cases, about the same number of HFTI cases, and a slight increase in HHM cases.

Lastly, Ms. Aguirre briefly discussed the improved complaint form on the BHGS website, which has streamlined the process for both consumers and enforcement staff.

Council Member Comment: Steve Weitekamp thanked Ms. Aguirre and her team for their work. He noted the statistics from the fourth quarter of 2024 and suggested that the Bureau aim to replicate those high numbers. Mr. Weitekamp suggested that the Bureau issue press releases related to enforcement actions to better inform the public regarding bad actors.

Ms. Aguirre responded that the citations, court decisions, accusations, and similar information can be found on the BHGS website when searching for a licensed business. She also noted that the page will be more user friendly on the updated BHGS website.

Mr. Weitekamp shared that FMCSA is having a staffing crisis and asked if the Bureau is encountering issues when partnering with FMSCA. Ms. Aguirre answered that the Bureau's relationship with FMSCA has not been affected.

Mr. Weitekamp asked for a general timeframe and location for the upcoming household mover sweep operations. Ms. Aguirre responded that the sweep will occur soon, but that she could not disclose the location.

Mr. Weitekamp asked why the citation fine statistics for the fourth quarter of 2024 were so much higher than other quarters. Ms. Aguirre said the higher numbers include a large federal citation that was issued during that quarter as well as an operation that involved several interconnected companies that resulted in higher fines.

Council Member Comment: Burt Grimes asked if citations show up in Google searches for people who are researching companies but that might not be aware of the Bureau. Ms. Aguirre said she would look into it. Deputy Chief Claire Goldstene added that the Bureau is conscious of the public's lack of awareness or understanding of the Bureau and its jurisdiction and that Content Manager Joanne Van has made good progress increasing communication and outreach efforts to consumers. Ms. Van added that the license search feature will be much more visible on the upcoming new BHGS website.

Council Member Comment: Pascal Benyamini noted that he did a search for citations for a moving company and was properly directed to the BHGS website.

Council Member Comment: Steve Weitekamp expressed his concern about the public misinterpreting complaints as being primarily issued against licensed businesses. Ms. Aguirre said that the Bureau's focus is not solely complaint driven and that enforcement sweeps are about proactive consumer protection.

11. Communications and Education Update

a. BHGS Website Improvements

Content Manager Joanne Van provided an update on the Bureau's communication and education work including outreach events, publications, website improvements, social media, videos, and overall communications.

Ms. Van announced that the Bureau is finalizing a video about tips for purchasing a protection plan and is also planning an instructional video series on how to apply for a license with the Bureau. The series will cover all BHGS regulated industries and will be shared with unlicensed businesses during compliance checks.

Ms. Van reported that the Bureau has a new publication, “The Right to Repair Act: A Consumer Guide,” which explains the provisions of the Right to Repair Act as well as how to find license information or file a complaint for paid repairs. She said the Bureau also updated its publication, “What Happens During a Bureau Inspection of Your Business,” which explains what to expect and where to reach out if businesses have questions during inspections.

Ms. Van reported that the Bureau continues to post weekly on social media in both English and Spanish on various topics for consumers, applicants, and licensees. She discussed recently posted graphics and follower counts, noting a December 2024 decrease due to X’s mass removal of bot accounts that month.

Ms. Van shared that the Bureau would begin working with DCA to execute the full redesign of the BHGS website in January 2026. She noted that the goal is to have a simple, clean design that makes it easier to find information. The new site is expected to launch within the first half of 2026.

Ms. Van reported that the Bureau has participated in 19 outreach events since the prior Advisory Council meeting and continues to attend events throughout California to connect with and provide resources to community members and state and local partners. She thanked enforcement staff who spoke at the BHGS outreach events.

Lastly, Ms. Van said the Bureau continues to prioritize transparent communication with staff, which includes distribution of the monthly Bureau newsletter, orientations, trainings, potlucks, and bi-annual staff meetings.

Council Member Comment: Tom Keepers complimented Ms. Van about collaboration on the content the Bureau develops and said he appreciated being able to contribute.

Council Member Comment: Burt Grimes thanked Ms. Van for her work with the outreach events, noting the importance of increased visibility for the Bureau.

12. Legislative and Policy Updates

- a. **Amendments to Labeling Requirements (Upholstered Furniture and Bedding)**
- b. **Household Movers Act Program: Implementing Regulations: Permit Requirements, Exam**
- c. **AB 366 (2024-25): Petrie-Norris and Ransom: Ignition Interlock Devices**

Policy Manager Eileen Yap provided an update on the regulatory proposal regarding the amendments to labeling requirements. The Bureau's DCA regulatory counsel had previously advised that the proposal be split into two: a "Section 100" proposal containing all technical amendments and a separate proposal for all substantive changes. Ms. Yap reported that the Section 100 action was approved and became effective on May 19, 2025, and that the Bureau is in the process of completing updates to the second proposal containing substantive amendments, including updates to terminology, label content, and label templates. The Bureau expects to resubmit the completed updates to the DCA regulatory counsel this fall.

Ms. Yap reported that the Bureau has completed an initial draft of the regulatory proposal regarding the Household Movers Act that would implement permit regulations to establish and clarify the written examination process, the process for abandoned applications, notice requirements in the event of a change in permit holder information or a change in ownership, the process to transfer permits, and the process to voluntarily suspend and restore permits. The Bureau circulated a discussion draft to the Advisory Council members for feedback. Steve Weitekamp requested that the Bureau amend the proposed language regarding the transfer of permits. The Bureau submitted the draft to the regulatory counsel this week and will work with her to address Mr. Weitekamp's feedback.

Lastly, Ms. Yap discussed AB 366, a bill that proposed to change existing law regarding the installation of ignition interlock devices (IID). An earlier version of the bill proposed to remove the courts' discretion to order installation of IIDs and instead mandate the installation, including upon a first conviction of driving under the influence. On August 29, 2025, AB 366 was amended to restore language in existing law to allow courts to continue exercising discretion. AB 366 also amended the expiration date of the law to January 1, 2033, instead of extending it indefinitely. The bill with these revisions was signed by the Governor on October 13, 2025.

Council Member Comment: Steve Weitekamp thanked Ms. Yap for the discussion they had and said he appreciated the open dialogue.

Council Member Comment: Burt Grimes asked if he could get a copy of the revised draft of the proposed HFTI regulations.

Ms. Yap responded that the draft is still being completed and has not yet been submitted to the regulatory counsel, but that the Bureau is considering sharing the updated draft with Advisory Council members when it is more complete.

Mr. Grimes asked if there was a timeline for when the new draft would be available. Ms. Yap answered she did not have a timeline, but that the Bureau aimed to have the updated draft to regulatory counsel this fall. She said it would probably be several more months before the Bureau has a clean version of the draft that incorporates all feedback, corrections, and edits. Mr. Grimes thanked Ms. Yap for all of her work.

Council Member Comment: Toby Taylor asked if the Bureau anticipates any need for regulatory changes to the existing IID regulations pursuant to the passage of AB 366.

Ms. Yap answered no because the only change being made to the bill is the extension of the expiration date; the earlier version, which also proposed a change to the court's discretion, was not approved.

13.2026 Advisory Council Meeting Proposed Dates

May 7 and November 5 were agreed upon for the 2026 Advisory Council meetings.

14.Future Agenda Items

There were no suggested future agenda items.

15.Adjournment

Deputy Chief Claire Goldstene thanked everyone for attending and adjourned the meeting at 12:21 p.m.