

Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Annual Report

October 29, 2021

Charge: The commission shall annually, not later than October 31, report the results of its findings and activities of the preceding fiscal year and its recommendations, which may include draft legislation, to the governor, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities and the joint committee on labor and workforce development.

I. Introduction

The Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities is a 23-member, independent state agency with a broad charge to advance the cause of all persons with disabilities in the Commonwealth. Comprised of volunteer commissioners from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and socio-economic backgrounds, members draw from personal and professional experience to passionately promote their charge and serve all individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts.

The scope of the Commission’s work includes examining ways to improve employment and transportation, assessing data and disparities, encourage inclusion of persons with disabilities as employees and vendors within the private and public sector workforce, assessing programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect persons with disabilities, advising the legislative and executive branches, and promoting and facilitating collaboration among local disability commissions, disability rights advocacy organizations and disability employment service providers.

The Commission is charged with filing an annual report of its findings and activities of the preceding fiscal year and its recommendations. The first meeting was held on July 21, 2021, after the previous fiscal year (FY2021) had ended. As such, this first report will briefly summarize the activities of the Commission from July 21, 2021 through October 29, 2021.

II. Commission Membership

Presented below is a list of commissioners:

Member	Organization	Title
Gyasi Burks-Abbott	LEND Program, Boston Children's Hospital/Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston	Self-Advocate Faculty
Charles Carr	Disability Policy Consortium	Legislative Liaison
Representative Gerard Cassidy	Massachusetts House of Representatives	State Representative

Member	Organization	Title
Representative Denise Garlick (Chair)	Massachusetts House of Representatives	State Representative
Nancy Garr-Colzie	Worcester Disability Commission / Center for Living & Working	Member / Board Chair
Representative Kay Khan	House of Representatives	State Representative
Andrew Levrault	Disabled Persons Protection Commission	Deputy General Counsel
Ann Lynch	Massachusetts Attorney General's Office	Assistant Attorney General
Felix Martinez		
Oswald Mondejar (Clerk)	Spaulding Rehabilitation Network (MGB)	Sr. Vice President of Mission & Advocacy
Representative Mathew Muratore	Massachusetts House of Representatives	State Representative
Bridget Murphy	Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin	Project Manager
Senator Patrick O'Connor	Massachusetts Senate	State Senator
Angela Ortiz	Massachusetts Pediatric Home Nursing Campaign	Parent & Founder
Kathy Petkauskos	University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School	Director, Work Without Limits
Nancy Rumbolt-Trzcinski	Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council	Chair/Member
Dan Shannon	MA Developmental Disabilities Council	Executive Director
Paul Spooner (Treasurer)	Metrowest Center for Independent Living	Executive Director
Kerry Thompson	Silent Rhythms Inc. / Disability Rights Fund	Executive Director / Senior Officer for Communications, Inclusion, and Analytics
Christopher White (Vice Chair)	Road To Responsibility, Inc. (RTR)	President/CEO
Liz Zelnick	Office of the Massachusetts State Treasurer	Deputy Director of Policy and Legislative Affairs

III. Legislative History

The permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities was established in Chapter 253 of the Acts of 2020. Commonly known as the law enforcement reform legislation, this

landmark law aimed to improve equity and racial justice in every corner of the Commonwealth. The Commission's charge is broad and empowers members to access data, study and make policy recommendations, receive and spend funds, and endorse legislation to advance the cause of all persons with disabilities in the Commonwealth.

The Commission's story, however, begins in 2019 with the work of Representative Josh Cutler, who as House Vice Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, led the Workability Subcommittee to develop recommendations to help remove barriers and promote disability hiring practices in the Commonwealth.

The report was the product of extensive research, including over 40 stakeholder meetings, 100 disability advocates, site visits to a dozen disability services providers and businesses, 39 pieces of public testimony and a public hearing at the State House. Among its recommendations was to establish a commission that "bridges both the Legislative and Executive branches and key stakeholder groups [to] ensure a permanent platform to the disability community and enhance communication."

The law enforcement reform legislation provided a vehicle to address equity for all people with disabilities. With the Commission now in place and funding secured, members have started meeting as they begin their important role in advocating for policy, budget, and legislation.

IV. Summary of Activity

As of filing of this report on October 29, 2021, the Commission has held 4 meetings. Meeting minutes are available in the appendix. The meetings have been broad in scope as the Commission begins its work and completes many necessary tasks required of new public commissions, such as trainings on the state ethics and open meeting laws.

Commissioners are building relationships by providing personal introductions and backgrounds on their connection to the disability community. Commissioners have a wide range of backgrounds and professions, including in the Legislature, executive branch, advocacy, provider, and through lived experience.

The Commission has elected an executive board:

- Chair: Representative Denise Garlick (State Representative for the 13th Norfolk District)
- Vice Chair: Chris White (President/CEO of Road To Responsibility)
- Treasurer: Paul Spooner (Executive Director of the Metrowest Center for Independent Living)
- Clerk: Oz Mondejar (Senior Vice President of Mission & Advocacy, Spaulding Rehabilitation Network (Mass General Brigham))

Members have engaged in a robust discussion on values statements to guide the Commission's work.

Additionally, the Commission invited Toni Wolf, Commissioner of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), to present on employment data and initiatives the MRC is undertaking to help individuals with disabilities achieve employment. This information is important as employment and the workforce is at the heart of the charge of the Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.

Lastly, the Legislature appropriated \$150,000 for the Commission in a supplemental budget, Chapter 29 of the Acts of 2021.

V. Presentation of Data

The Commission will conduct in-depth data collection and analysis in the upcoming fiscal year. In the meantime, for this report, an overview of the most up-to-date data relating to persons with disabilities in Massachusetts is presented below.

In 2018, there were 6,902,149 individuals living in the community in Massachusetts, of which 791,132 (11.6%) were persons with disabilities.

Massachusetts Residents by Disability Category (ages 18-64 living in the community)

Disability Category	# of MA Residents	% of MA Residents	% of Disabled in MA
Cognitive Disability	319,796	4.7%	40.2%
Ambulatory disability	381,520	5.6%	47.9%
Independent Living Disability	301,231	4.4%	37.8%
Self-Care Disability	158,718	2.3%	19.9%
Hearing Disability	208,039	3.0%	26.1%
Vision Disability	128,651	1.9%	16.2%

MA & US Employment for Individuals with Disabilities (age 18-64, living in the community)

2018	# With Disability	# With Disability & Employed	% With Disability Who Are Employed
MA	384,133	146,757	38.2%
US	20,212,750	7,602,698	37.6%

- Note: Employment data is likely to have changed drastically since 2019 due to the COVID-19 public health crisis. How the pandemic impacted employment, and how we recover, is likely to be a focus of the Commission in the upcoming year.

SOURCE: The Census Bureau collects data on disability primarily through the American Community Survey (ACS) and the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) and not the US Census. The most recent ACS data is from 2019, posted [online](#) by the Massachusetts

Rehabilitation Commission using data from the 2019 Disability Statistics Compendium, developed by the Rehabilitation Research and Training Center on Disability Statistics and Demographics at the University of New Hampshire.

VI. Values Statements

The Commission engaged in a robust discussion on values statements to guide the work. Statements were initially adopted from [*Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities*](#), published in 2017 by the Council of State Governments (CGS) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL) and adapted to the goals of the Commission.

Values Statements

The following values statements are adapted from [*Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities*](#), published in 2017 by the Council of State Governments (CGS) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

- 1) Disability is a natural part of the human experience that in no way diminishes one’s right to fully participate in all aspects of community life across their lifespan.
 - a) As such, state disability policy shall support the following five goals:
 - i) Equitable access to opportunities that contribute to physical and social wellness including inclusive, integrated and adaptive physical activity, sport, recreation and entertainment.
 - ii) Equal opportunity, including treating people with disabilities as individuals, making assessments based on facts, objective evidence and science, and providing effective and meaningful experiences in the most integrated setting appropriate.
 - iii) Full participation in society, including engagement of people with disabilities in relevant decision-making at the individual and systems levels, self-determination, self-advocacy and informed choice.
 - iv) Economic self-sufficiency, including employment-related services and supports, financial literacy, entrepreneurship and work incentives.
 - v) Independent living, including skills development and long-term services and supports.
- 2) Disability can develop at any point during an individual’s lifetime and have varying impacts.
 - a) As such, state agencies should ensure service delivery is relevant at all ages, is inclusive of all types of disabilities, and maximizes the strengths and abilities of the individual.
 - b) The Commonwealth of Massachusetts shall provide a centralized systems navigation process so that people with disabilities and their families have a place to ask questions and get answers about rights, responsibilities, services and supports.
- 3) Successful disability policy embraces the “nothing about us without us” principle.

- a) Individuals with disabilities, as well as families and allies, should be engaged throughout the policymaking process at all levels. This includes increasing the actual participation of people with disabilities at all levels of state government.
- 4) People with disabilities have valuable and unique strengths and contributions yet they are underutilized in our workforce and frequently experience social and economic disadvantage.
 - a) People with disabilities contribute to the rich diversity of our Commonwealth and should be included in all diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in public policy and among private enterprise.
- 5) Employers should make efforts to hire people with disabilities because the workplace is enriched through increased innovation, creativity, and productivity by persons with disabilities.
 - a) State disability employment initiatives should encourage public and private employers of all sizes and industries to adopt and promote a value proposition to include individuals with disabilities in their organizations as employees, customers, and suppliers.

VII. Goals for Next Year

With the Commission's values statements in place to guide its work, members will turn to the charge of the Commission:

"The commission shall work to advance the cause of all persons with disabilities in the commonwealth. The commission shall be empowered to

(i) study, review, advise and report on:

- (A) any disparities across service or geographical areas concerning the range of available options within state disability services;
- (B) the status of transportation for persons with disabilities including access to employment opportunities;
- (C) the effect of public assistance for persons with disabilities as it pertains to earning limits and eligibility for subsidies for food, housing, child care and other benefits;
- (D) establishing school-to-work activities for transition aged youth with disabilities that establish a bridge to self-sufficiency and engage school supports, family members and employers;
- (E) the status of the strategic plan to make the commonwealth a model employer by seeking to increase the number of people with disabilities employed by the executive branch;
- (F) the enhanced enforcement of state requirements that promote diversity in state government employment; and
- (G) the number of persons with disabilities who apply for state disability services and are unsuccessful in receiving services;

(ii) facilitate and promote public awareness to encourage inclusion of persons with disabilities as employees and vendors within the private and public sector workforce, including under-represented business sectors of all sizes;

(iii) assess programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect persons with disabilities, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate;

(iv) advise executive and legislative bodies regarding the impact of proposed legislation on persons with disabilities; and

(v) promote and facilitate collaboration among local disability commissions, disability rights advocacy organizations and disability employment service providers.”

The following are broad topics that have garnered attention in the first few meetings, although the list is non-exhaustive and subject to change:

- Understand the differences in concerns and issues between various types of disabilities of individuals.
- Examine work issues and concerns, including employment opportunities and workforce needs.
- Evaluate access to transportation.
- Study benefits and benefit cutoffs.
- Investigate access to housing.
- Evaluate current services of state agencies.

VIII. Appendix

Enabling Statute of the Commission

Section 1 of Chapter 253 of the Acts of 2020 ([Link](#))

“SECTION 1. Chapter 3 of the General Laws is hereby amended by adding the following 4 sections:-

...

Section 74. (a) There shall be a permanent commission on the status of persons with disabilities. The commission shall consist of: 3 persons appointed by the president of the senate; 3 persons appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; 1 person appointed by the minority leader of the senate; 1 person appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives; 7 persons appointed by the governor; the attorney general or their designee; the state treasurer or their designee; the state secretary or their designee; the executive director of the disabled persons protection commission or their designee; 1 person from the University of Massachusetts medical school Work Without Limits program; 1 person from the Massachusetts Disability Policy Consortium; 1 person from the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers, Inc.; and 1 person from the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council.

(b) Members of the commission shall be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and socio-economic backgrounds, and should have personal experience, professional background or demonstrated interest on issues relating to persons with disabilities. It shall be the goal of the commission to include representation from a broad spectrum of disabilities, as well as perspectives of family members, disability advocacy organizations, human service agencies, regional employment collaboratives and business and labor organizations throughout the commonwealth.

(c) The commission shall be an independent agency of the commonwealth and shall not be subject to the control of any other department or agency. Members of the commission shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 268A as they apply to special state employees.

(d)(1) A member of the commission shall serve a term of 3 years and until a successor is appointed, or the member is reappointed by their appointing or nominating authority.

(2) Vacancies in the membership of the commission shall be filled by the original appointing or nominating authority for the balance of the unexpired term. If the position was filled by a nominating body, the replacement member shall be selected from solicited nominations. If the nominating body or appointing authority does not fill a position, the existing members of the commission shall fill the vacancy from a pool of qualified applicants pursuant to subsection (b).

(3) Nominations for vacancies in the membership shall be solicited through an open application process using a uniform and accessible application, which accommodates candidates of all abilities. Appointments shall be announced not later than April 1 of each year.

(4) The commission shall elect from among its members a chair, a vice-chair, a clerk, a treasurer and any other officers it deems necessary to carry out its mission.

(5) The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services, but shall be reimbursed for any usual and customary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

(e) An executive director shall be selected by the commission and may hire staff. The executive director shall be qualified by his or her experience working on issues relating to persons with disabilities, organizing research and reports, advocacy and communication skills and demonstrated leadership abilities. The executive director shall not simultaneously serve as a member of the commission.

(f) The commission shall work to advance the cause of all persons with disabilities in the commonwealth. The commission shall be empowered to (i) study, review, advise and report on: (A) any disparities across service or geographical areas concerning the range of available options within state disability services; (B) the status of transportation for persons with disabilities including access to employment opportunities; (C) the effect of public assistance for persons with disabilities as it pertains to earning limits and eligibility for subsidies for food, housing, child care and other benefits; (D) establishing school-to-work activities for transition aged youth with disabilities that establish a bridge to self-sufficiency and engage school supports, family members and employers; (E) the status of the strategic plan to make the commonwealth a model employer by seeking to increase the number of people with disabilities employed by the executive branch; (F) the enhanced enforcement of state requirements that promote diversity in state government employment; and (G) the number of persons with disabilities who apply for state disability services and are unsuccessful in receiving services; (ii) facilitate and promote public awareness to encourage inclusion of persons with disabilities as employees and vendors within the private and public sector workforce, including under-represented business sectors of all sizes; (iii) assess programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect persons with disabilities, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate; (iv) advise executive and legislative bodies regarding the impact of proposed legislation on persons with disabilities; and (v) promote and facilitate collaboration among local disability commissions, disability rights advocacy organizations and disability employment service providers.

(g) The commission shall annually, not later than October 31, report the results of its findings and activities of the preceding fiscal year and its recommendations, which may include draft legislation, to the governor, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities and the joint committee on labor and workforce development.

(h) The powers of the commission shall include, but not be limited to: (i) using voluntary and uncompensated services of private individuals, agencies and organizations as may from time to time be offered and needed; (ii) reviewing policies and legislation and make recommendations to agencies and officers of the state and local subdivisions of government to effectuate the purposes of subsections (f) and (g); (iii) selecting an executive director and to acquire adequate staff to perform its duties; (iv) establishing and maintain such offices as it may deem necessary; (v)

enacting by-laws for its own governance; (vi) establishing subcommittees or regional chapters of the commission as it deems necessary; and (vii) holding regular, public meetings and fact-finding hearings and other public forums as it may deem necessary.

(i) Public meetings should be held in a manner accessible to and welcoming of persons of all abilities with necessary accommodations to ensure broad participation. Notices of meetings and other information shall be posted to a publicly accessible website that also accommodates persons who are visually impaired.

(j) The commission may request from all state agencies such information and assistance as the commission may require.

(k) The commission may accept and solicit funds, including any gifts, donations, grants or bequests or any federal funds, for any of the purposes of this section. Such funds shall be deposited in a separate account with the state treasurer, be received by the state treasurer on behalf of the commonwealth and be expended by the commission in accordance with commission by-laws and state and federal law.”

Meeting Minutes

July 21, 2021: Meeting 1 Minutes of the Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Date of meeting: Wednesday, July 21, 2021

Start time: 10:00am

End time: 11:30am

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Gyasi Burks-Abbott - Developmental Disabilities Council
2	Charles Carr - Disability Policy Consortium
3	Representative Gerard Cassidy - House of Representatives
4	Representative Denise Garlick - House of Representatives
5	Nancy Garr-Colzie - Member, Worcester Disability Commission; Board Chair, Center for Living & Working
6	Representative Kay Khan - House of Representatives
7	Andrew Levrault - Disabled Persons Protection Commission
8	Ann Lynch - Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
9	Oswald Mondejar - Spaulding Rehabilitation Network (MGB)
10	Representative Mathew Muratore - House of Representatives
11	Bridget Murphy - Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin
12	Senator Patrick O'Connor - Massachusetts Senate
13	Angela Ortiz - Massachusetts Pediatric Home Nursing Campaign
14	Kathy Petkauskus - University of Massachusetts Medical School
15	Nancy Rumbolt-Trzcinski - Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council
16	Dan Shannon - MA Developmental Disabilities Council
17	Paul Spooner - Metrowest Center for Independent Living
18	Kerry Thompson - Silent Rhythms Inc. / Disability Rights Fund
19	Christopher White - Road To Responsibility, Inc. (RTR)
20	Liz Zelnick - Office of the Massachusetts State Treasurer
Members Not Present	
	Felix Martinez

Proceedings

I. Welcome, Roll Call, and Oath – 10:00am

- a. Representative Garlick welcomed and congratulated Commission members on their appointments. The Commission was established in Chapter 253 of the Acts of 2020 and Rep. Garlick convened the meeting because the initiative started in the House of Representatives. Rep. Garlick described the meeting agenda as primarily housekeeping and explained the accessibility: ASL interpreters were on the Zoom call, CART services were available, and it was being livestreamed on YouTube for public viewing.

- b. Roll Call was called with 20 members present (See table on page 1).
- c. Commissioners were sworn in by Jordan Maynard, Chief Secretary, Governor's Office of Boards and Commissions.

II. Conflict of Interest Overview – 10:11am

- a. David Giannotti, Public Education and Communications Division Chief of the State Ethics Commission, provided an overview of the state conflict of interest law since commissioners are subject to the provisions of chapter 268A as they apply to special state employees.
- b. Information covered by David can be found in the accompanying meeting materials document named "State Ethics Commission - Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities 07.21.21." Topics included gifts, nepotism and self-dealing, code of conduct, and duty of loyalty.
- c. David stated that disclosures for conflict of interest should be filed with the appointing authority for each Commission member.

III. Open Meeting Law Overview – 10:32am

- a. Carrie Benedon, Assistant Attorney General and Director of the Attorney General's Division of Open Government, provided an overview of the open meeting law.
- b. Information covered by Carrie can be found in the accompanying meeting materials document named "Open Meeting Law Commission on Status of Persons with Disabilities 07.21.21." Topics included quorum and deliberation, meeting, accessibility, notice, and resources.
- c. Member must sign certification within 2 weeks of receipt that states they have received Open Meeting Law materials and understand the requirements of the law. The document and accompanying materials were distributed to Commissioners after the meeting.

IV. Charge to the Commission 10:51am

- a. Representative Josh Cutler, House Chair of the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development, greeted the Commission. Representative Cutler spearheaded the Workability Subcommittee in the House of Representatives during the 2019-20 session and creation of the Commission was a key recommendation of the Subcommittee's report.
- b. Representative Denise Garlick read the charge of the commission.

V. Personal Introductions

- a. Commissioners provided personal introductions and described their involvement in the disability community.
- b. Gyasi Burks-Abbott: Member of Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council (MDDC).
- c. Charles Carr: Legislative Liaison for Disability Policy Consortium.
- d. Representative Gerard Cassidy: State Representative for the 9th Plymouth District (Brockton).

- e. Representative Denise Garlick: State Representative for the 13th Norfolk District (Needham, Dover, Medfield), Chair of the House Committee on Bills in the Third Reading, and mother of young adult with a disability.
- f. Nancy Garr-Colzie: Mobility disability and is working on transportation access.
- g. Representative Kay Khan: State Representative for the 11th Middlesex District (Newton) and former House Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities.
- h. Andrew Leverault: Deputy General Counsel for Disabled Persons Protection Commission.
- i. Ann Lynch: Assistant Attorney General working in Consumer Protection and Civil Rights Division.
- j. Oswald Mondejar: Senior Administrator at Mass General Brigham with Spaulding Rehabilitation and has a limb difference.
- k. Representative Mathew Muratore: State Representative for the 1st Plymouth District, served on the Workability Subcommittee, was a licensed nursing home administrator, and ran a pediatric unit.
- l. Bridget Murphy: Appointee of State Secretary William F. Galvin and has a history of working on voting accessibility.
- m. Senator Patrick O'Connor: State Senator for the Plymouth and Norfolk District and has focused on disabilities since entering office.
- n. Angela Ortiz: Mother of daughter with complex needs, founder of the Massachusetts Pediatric Home Nursing Campaign, and is involved with MDDC.
- o. Kathy Petkauskos: Director of Work without Limits at UMass Medical School, mother of legally blind child, and worked on Workability Subcommittee
- p. Nancy Rumbolt-Trzcinski: Chair of the Massachusetts Independent Living Council, career has focused on working with persons with disabilities, and has visual impairment.
- q. Dan Shannon: Director of MDDC.
- r. Paul Spooner: Director of MetroWest Center for Independent Living in Framingham.
- s. Kerry Thompson: Executive Director for Silent Rhythms, Inc. and Senior Officer for Disability Rights Fund.
- t. Chris White: Appointee of the Association of Developmental Disability Providers and CEO of Road to Responsibility.
- u. Liz Zelnick: Deputy Policy and Legislative Director for Treasurer Deb Goldberg.

VI. Vote of Officers – 11:19am

- a. Representative Garlick explained that the statute calls for the Commission to elect a Chair, Vice Chair, Clerk, and Treasurer from among its members. She suggested electing a Chair and Vice Chair today to plan for future meetings. Representative

Garlick asked commissioners if they had thoughts and objections to this plan. No thoughts or objections were put forward.

- b. The Commission temporarily elected Senator O'Connor to chair the meeting and conduct the election of Chair since he did not anticipate being nominated for the position. Chris White nominated Representative Denise Garlick for Chair; the motion was seconded. No other commissioners were nominated. Representative Denise Garlick was elected Chair by affirmation.
- c. Representative Garlick opened the floor to nominations for Vice Chair. Representative Garlick nominated Chris White; the motion was seconded. Charles Carr nominated Paul Spooner; the motion was seconded. Paul Spooner declined nomination. Some Commissioners voiced a desire for a person with disabilities to be Vice Chair; there was agreement that the Commission should aim to have representation of the disability community among officers. Representative Khan nominated Oswald Mondejar; motion was seconded. Roll call was conducted. Chris White was elected Vice Chair.
- d. Representative Garlick congratulated Chris White and stated that she would work with Chris to ensure commissioners with disabilities would be nominated to Clerk and Treasurer.

VII. Budget Update – 11:34am

- a. Representative Garlick explained that the supplemental budget passed in the House and Senate included \$150,000 for the Commission. The Conference Committee report was recently passed in the House and was pending in the Senate (NOTE: The supplemental budget has since been signed into law by the Governor).

VIII. Proposed Meeting Schedule – 11:34am

- a. Representative Garlick's suggested meeting in September and October, with another meeting at the end of October if necessary to approve the Commission's annual report. Representative Garlick's office would be sending a follow-up email asking commissioners to hold the following dates:
 - i. Wednesday, September 22 at 10:00am
 - ii. Wednesday, October 20 at 10:00am
 - iii. Friday, October 29 at 10:00am, (if necessary, for approval of annual report).

IX. Adjournment

- a. Meeting adjourned at 11:36am.

September 22, 2021: Meeting 2 Minutes of the Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Date of meeting: Wednesday, September 22, 2021

Start time: 10:00am

End time: 11:30am

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Gyasi Burks-Abbott - LEND Program, Boston Children's Hospital/Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston
2	Charles Carr - Disability Policy Consortium
3	Representative Gerard Cassidy - House of Representatives
4	Representative Denise Garlick - House of Representatives
5	Nancy Garr-Colzie - Member, Worcester Disability Commission; Board Chair, Center for Living & Working
6	Andrew Levrault - Disabled Persons Protection Commission
7	Ann Lynch - Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
8	Oswald Mondejar - Spaulding Rehabilitation Network (MGB)
9	Representative Mathew Muratore - House of Representatives
10	Senator Patrick O'Connor - Massachusetts Senate
11	Angela Ortiz - Massachusetts Pediatric Home Nursing Campaign
12	Kathy Petkauskos - University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
13	Nancy Rumbolt-Trzcinski - Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council
14	Dan Shannon - MA Developmental Disabilities Council
15	Paul Spooner - Metrowest Center for Independent Living
16	Kerry Thompson - Silent Rhythms Inc. / Disability Rights Fund
17	Christopher White - Road To Responsibility, Inc. (RTR)
18	Liz Zelnick - Office of the Massachusetts State Treasurer
Members Not Present	
	Representative Kay Khan - House of Representatives
	Felix Martinez
	Bridget Murphy - Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin

Proceedings

I. Welcome and Roll Call - 10:00am

- a. Representative Garlick welcomed Commission members to the second meeting of the Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Rep. Garlick explained the accessibility: ASL interpreters were on the Zoom call, CART services were available, and the meeting was being livestreamed on malegislature.gov for public viewing.
- b. Roll call was called with 18 members present (see table on page 1).
- c. The Commission approved the minutes unanimously among those present.

II. Vote of Clerk and Treasurer – 10:06am

- a. Representative Garlick opened the floor to nominations for clerk. Paul Spooner nominated Oz Mondejar; the motion was seconded. No other commissioners were nominated. Oz Mondejar was elected clerk by affirmation.
- b. Representative Garlick opened the floor to nominations for treasurer. Oz Mondejar nominated Paul Spooner; the motion was seconded. No other commissioners were nominated. Paul Spooner was elected treasurer by affirmation.

III. Presentation by Toni Wolf (Commissioner, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission) - 10:09am

- a. Representative Garlick introduced Toni Wolf, the Commissioner of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC), to provide a presentation on employment and the workforce.
- b. The MRC receives its mandate from the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act and its purpose is to advance employment and ensure sustainable wages.
- c. Commissioner Wolf presented a PowerPoint (available [here](#)) that included demographic data of clients served, research and best practices, and MRC's goals to use data to help clients achieve employment. The Commissioner also described MRC's application for Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA) Innovation Grant for \$17M over a 5-year period to provide 2 simultaneous Vocational Rehab service programs.
- d. Commissioners asked questions of Commissioner Wolf. When asked if MRC was thinking of following the Maryland pilot project that raised the asset limit, Commissioner Wolf said they were in touch with Maryland. In response to a question about involving individuals with disabilities, Commissioner Wolf said that MRC believes in co-creation and would be send a plan to incorporate people with disabilities and pay them for their expertise and time. That plan is available here: [link].
- e. Employment and the workforce was a topic during questions. Commissioner Wolf said that as part of the ARPA funding debate, there are conversations around short-term and long-term investments in the industry. They are engaging with local chambers of commerce to secure employment opportunities.

IV. Values Statements – 11:00am

- a. Commissioners agreed to discuss the values statements agenda item before lessons learned during COVID.
- b. Rep. Garlick introduced the draft values statements. The draft statements were adopted from "[Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities](#), published in 2017 by the Council of State Governments (CGS) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).
- c. ” and she hopes that the Commission will adapt them. She suggested going through each statement one bullet point at a time. She opened the floor for input, including agreeing, amending, adding, substituting, or deleting statements.

- d. **Values Statement #1:** Disability is a natural part of the human experience that in no way diminishes one’s right to fully participate in all aspects of community life.
 - i. No commissioner disagreed with first value statement, but several provided additional comments.
 - ii. There was support for including language for state agencies to encourage individuals to take risks, although not every risk is successful. There was significant debate and not all commissioners were in agreement over the suggestion of adding phrases like “person-centered planning,” “consumer choice,” or “supported decision-making.” Those in support thought they were affirming words while others pointed out that some, especially in the intellectual and developmental disability movement, were not empowered by these concepts. This led to a discussion about the vast differences among subpopulations of individuals with disabilities, who face significantly different opportunities and challenges depending on their disability. This may be a topic for future meetings.
 - iii. Commissioners expressed support for prioritizing the voices of people living with experience.
 - iv. There was support for ensuring the phrase “full participation in society” include recreation, education, and others, in addition to employment.
 - v. There was support for adding a value statement that disability is one of several identities; you may need to look at other ways that people with disabilities are discriminated against and cases of double discrimination that include disability and race.
 - vi. Rep. Garlick suggested the executive board be empowered to draft language to add to the values statements that take into account the commissioners’ input and discussion, which would be sent to members for discussion at the next meeting. She asked if there was opposition to this; there was none.

V. Lessons Learned during COVID

- a. Time did not allow for discussion of this item.

VI. Outline of Annual Report - 11:30am

- a. Representative Garlick explained that the Commission must submit its first annual report by October 31, 2021, which will cover topics discussed in the Commission’s first three meetings, including the values statement.
- b. Meetings have been scheduled for October 20th at 10am and October 29th at 10am (if necessary).
- c. Rep. Garlick asked if any members had feedback on the draft annual report outline, which was distributed before the meeting. Members did not have feedback.
- d. The executive board will draft and circulate an annual report in advance of the October 20 meeting.

VII. Adjournment

- a. Meeting adjourned at 11:34am.

October 20, 2021: Meeting 3 Minutes of the Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Date of meeting: Wednesday, October 20, 2021

Start time: 10:00am

End time: 11:30am

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Gyasi Burks-Abbott - LEND Program, Boston Children's Hospital/Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston
2	Representative Gerard Cassidy - House of Representatives
3	Representative Denise Garlick - House of Representatives
4	Nancy Garr-Colzie - Member, Worcester Disability Commission; Board Chair, Center for Living & Working
5	Representative Kay Khan - House of Representatives
6	Andrew Levrault - Disabled Persons Protection Commission
7	Ann Lynch - Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
8	Oswald Mondejar - Spaulding Rehabilitation Network (MGB)
9	Representative Mathew Muratore - House of Representatives
10	Bridget Murphy - Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin
11	Angela Ortiz - Massachusetts Pediatric Home Nursing Campaign
12	Kathy Petkauskos - University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
13	Nancy Rumbolt-Trzcinski - Massachusetts Statewide Independent Living Council
14	Dan Shannon - MA Developmental Disabilities Council
15	Paul Spooner - Metrowest Center for Independent Living
16	Kerry Thompson - Silent Rhythms Inc. / Disability Rights Fund
17	Christopher White - Road To Responsibility, Inc. (RTR)
18	Liz Zelnick - Office of the Massachusetts State Treasurer
Members Not Present	
	Charles Carr - Disability Policy Consortium
	Felix Martinez
	Senator Patrick O'Connor - Massachusetts Senate

Proceedings

I. Welcome, Roll Call, and Approval of 9/22/21 Meeting Minutes - 10:00am

- a. Representative Garlick welcomed Commission members to the second meeting of the Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. Rep. Garlick explained the accessibility: ASL interpreters were on the Zoom call, CART services were available, and the meeting was being livestreamed on malegislature.gov for public viewing.
- b. Roll call was called with 18 members present (see table on page 1).

- c. Chris White motioned to accept the meeting minutes; Liz Zelnick seconded the motion. The Commission unanimously approved the minutes among those present.

II. Continue Discussion of Values Statements – 10:08am

- a. Chair Garlick opened the floor to continue discussions of the values statements from the previous meeting. She asked that commissioners who emailed her suggestions present them to the entire Commission to ensure open deliberation.
- b. Commissioners supported adding statements on inclusion and language supporting access to integrated and adaptive physical activity, sport, recreation and entertainment, in addition to work opportunities.
- c. Commissioners supported adding in the 4th bullet that people with disabilities have value to add to workforce but are often undervalued and experience social and economic disadvantage. Commissioners pointed to health equity, diversion, and inclusiveness as reasons to support this statement.
- d. There was debate on the suggestion to strike the 5th bullet and insert language that “Massachusetts shall adopt and promote a value proposition for public and private employers of all sizes and industries to include individuals with disabilities in their organizations as employees, customers, and suppliers.” This led to discussion of companies’ diversity statements and whether disabilities should be included in those statements. Commissioners voiced support for this and would share language their own organizations use to promote disability inclusion in diversity statements. Overall, there was strong support for highlighting disability in diversity and inclusion.
- e. There was support for adding language to design the workforce to help people with disabilities to locate, be recruited and retain jobs – opportunities to be engaged
- f. Commissioners expressed support for keeping the statements broad.
- g. There was general support to amend language in the 3rd bullet to focus on the individuals themselves being engaged in policy making, specifically the phrase “alongside families, advocates and champions from agencies, education, business and communities” without having a qualifier. However, several commissioners expressed reluctance to completely strike the phrase because families and allies are so important.
- h. Collin Fedor (Rep. Garlick staff) laid out the timeline for submitting the annual report, including the values statements, by the statutory deadline:
 - i. **Friday, October 22 at 5:00pm:** Deadline to submit written comments on the values statements and draft annual report.
 - ii. **Wednesday, October 27 at 10:00am:** Executive board will share final draft of values statements and annual report.
 - iii. **Friday, October 29 at 10:00am:** Virtual meeting to finalize values statements and annual report.

III. Lessons Learned during COVID – 10:55am

- a. Rep. Garlick asked commissioners to share in 2-3 minutes what they have learned for disability population during COVID, focusing on strengths and things that need to be strengthened.
- b. One commissioner share that they felt multiple levels of effects. They had to close the office, which required a substantial change in management philosophy. As a person with a disability, they were set up with tools to work from home, but the personal cost (e.g. oxygen delivery) was stressful, and there was an impact from putting off medical checkups. They described that people with disabilities have always been able to work remotely and the pandemic helped showcase that people are capable of working from different locations.
- c. One commissioner described the opportunities and barriers of COVID. For the deaf and hard of hearing community, access to information has been a challenge - can no longer read lips with masks on, need to decide whether comfortable touching someone to communicate or not communicate at all. Meetings conducted virtually are not always accessible. The biggest struggle for communication has been information on health care – updates do not provide option for sign language, interpreters are often unavailable for telehealth appointments, and hospitals do not have a website dedicated to accessibility. The commissioner shared a link to the COVID card the Commission of Deaf and Hard of Hearing created for people to point to facilitate communication:
<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/mcdhh-visor-card>.
- d. One commissioner described their experience as an agency in the Berkshires. They have had to handle all phone calls coming into the agency because people have really needed to talk due to isolation. Further, as a person who is blind, their service dog cannot not determine 6 feet apart for social distancing.
- e. One commissioner shared that people were more resilient and able to better adjust than the staff providing the support. Telehealth works for more people than expected, but people with most complex needs were more and more left behind and families experienced greater responsibilities day to day than when in person was available. They also stated it is easier to close services than reopen services and it has become more difficult to get people with disabilities jobs that fit their life goals as it seems employers have moved away from strategies that help people with disabilities acquire employment.
- f. One commissioner described that the nurses delivering skilled care needed to leave workforce, exacerbating existing problems. They described safety and needing to advocate when the crisis standards of care came out. They described that children with disabilities lost services because they were not in school, which placed a greater stress on parents to deliver these services themself.
- g. One commissioner described how COVID highlighted problems that already existed. They pointed to the ability of people to work remotely and described his hope that the flexibility afforded by remote meetings, including municipal meetings, remains.
- h. One commissioner reflected on the previous comments and described his observations in healthcare, where he saw adaptability and resiliency, such as masks with screens to allow lip reading. They described the need to continue to be more resourceful on how we consider accessibility.

IV. Annual Report - 11:25am

- a. A draft of the annual report was sent to commissioners and the public before the meeting. Rep. Garlick described the report's structure and asked Commissioners to review the report and follow the timeline described by Collin Fedor at the end of II. Discussion of Values Statements.

V. Adjournment - 11:30am

- a. Rep. Muratore motioned to adjourn, Oz Mondejar seconded. Motion was unanimously approved and meeting adjourned at 11:30am.

October 29, 2021: Meeting 4 Minutes of the Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

- Final meeting minutes have not been approved by the Commission. Agenda for the meeting was as follows:

- I. Welcome, Roll Call, and Approval of 10/20/21 Meeting Minutes**
- II. Review of Values Statements**
- III. Review of Annual Report**
- IV. Adjournment**