



THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS
OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL

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ATTORNEY GENERAL

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May 31, 2007

Dear Chief Executive:

The Office of the Attorney General and the Massachusetts Office on Disability have been collaborating with local and municipal governments to ensure that people with disabilities have access to public meetings. In furtherance of these efforts, we are writing to remind you and other local officials that all residents of a community have the right to access to all municipal decision-making bodies. As you may know, this right is guaranteed by both federal and state laws, including Title II of the federal Americans with Disabilities Act; the federal Rehabilitation Act of 1973, § 504; Article 114 of the Massachusetts Constitution as enforced through the Massachusetts Equal Rights Act, G.L. c. 93, § 103; and the Massachusetts Open Meeting Law, G.L. c. 39, § 23A, *et seq.*

To assure people with disabilities an equal opportunity to fully participate in public meetings, municipalities should:

Assure independent physical access to people who use wheelchairs or other mobility aids.

Meetings that are open to the public should be held in locations that provide, at a minimum, accessible parking (if public parking is offered), an accessible path of travel, an accessible entrance, and an accessible bathroom (if bathrooms are provided for public use).

Assure communication access. Upon reasonable advance request, municipalities should make available to people with disabilities auxiliary aides and services they need in order to have an equal opportunity to participate in public meetings. Examples of auxiliary aides and services include, but are not limited to, assistive listening devices, a sign language interpreter, and written materials in alternative formats such as large print, Braille, or audio tape.

We are available to provide assistance if you have any questions about what is legally required under both federal and state laws governing access to public meetings. If you would like technical assistance in evaluating specific measures your local government should take to ensure compliance with these laws, you may call the Massachusetts Office on Disability at 1-800-322-2020 (617-727-7440 in Boston) or the Attorney General's Disability Rights Project at (617) 727-2200.

Sincerely,

Martha Coakley
Attorney General

Myra Berloff
Massachusetts Office on Disability

