

# Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

## Disability Employment Subcommittee

### Meeting Minutes

Date of meeting: Monday, November 13, 2023

Start time: 12:00pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Kathy Petkauskos (Chair) – Director, Work Without Limits at UMass Chan Medical School
2	Chris White – CEO & President, Road to Responsibility, Inc.
3	Gyasi Burks-Abbott – Self Advocate Faculty, LEND Program, Boston Children's Hospital
4	Carl Richardson – ADA Coordinator, Massachusetts State House
5	Representative Mathew Muratore – Massachusetts House of Representatives
Members Not Present	
6	Oz Mondejar – President, Mucho Gusto Consulting

Action Items		Person Responsible
1	Kathy will reach out to Joe Reale at MRC to see if he would be interested in co-presenting along with Kathy on services provided under our respective Work Incentives Planning and Assistance grants	Kathy
2	Follow up with MOD on state as a Model Employer	Kathy
3	Follow up with Supplier Diversity Office	Imene
4	Come with an idea and/or contact to identify and facilitate at least one opportunity (e.g., event, speaking engagement, information dissemination) to engage and educate at least 100 small and medium businesses/employers on the value of including people with disabilities in the workplace, available community resources, and recognition of effective employer practices.	ALL
5	Gyasi will share his presentation slides on the benefits of employing people with disabilities	Gyasi

### Welcome, Roll Calls, and Introductions

1. Welcome, Roll Call, and Introductions
2. Inspirational Quote provided by Carl Richardson: “Just because a man lacks the use of his eyes doesn’t mean he lacks vision” by Stevie Wonder.
  - Kathy suggested that perhaps we could consider having a future conversation or presentation on the topic of ableism.
3. The [Planned Lifetime Assistance Network “PLAN” of MA and RI](#)  
Presentation: “[Introduction to Government Benefits and Special Needs Trusts](#)” by Joan McGrath, Executive Director and Kathy Vitello, Director of Operations
  - Questions/Answers from members:
    - Tell us more about your organization.
      - We are a 501(c)(3). We were organized in the late 1960s through parents looking to advocate for their children in MA and RI. We have 25 employees. We are listed in the [Social Security Administration Program Operations Manual “POMS” website](#).
    - For means tested benefits, a person’s home and land doesn’t count. Can an individual use their Special Needs Trust to acquire the assets needed to purchase a home?
      - Technically yes, but PLAN currently doesn’t hold property.
      - We advise the individual to set up a life estate plan where they put it in a separate trust. It can then be used to take care of the property.
      - If an individual is concerned about coming off their benefits because of their assets, then they would need to set up a Special Needs Trust.
        - ➔ People have option to set up that trust: they can come to the PLAN, they can set it up with an attorney, family friend, professional trustee.
      - We have been partnering with other disability organizations to educate people on Special Needs Trusts and what options they may have.
    - Kathy Petkauskos: at Work Without Limits (WWL), we have a [Social Security Work Incentives Planning and Assistance Grant](#). There’s a natural synergy between WWL and PLAN.

- WWL services between 500 to 1,000 people annually, there may be an opportunity for cross referral, especially on how working can impact someone's benefits.
    - We share the MA territory with MA Rehabilitation Commission ([which will be rebranded soon to be MassAbility](#)) and the [Disability Law Center provides protection and advocacy services](#).
  - PLAN now also works with individuals who have [inherited IRAs since the Secure Act passed](#).
  - Who are the other three organizations that have the pool trust?
    - The Guardian, the Arc of Bristol County and Arc of Berkshire County.
4. Gyasi shared the [2023 National Council Progress Report](#). This report examines the implications of asset limits in government-sponsored social safety net programs on the economic self-sufficiency and financial independence of people with disabilities and focuses on four critical areas of public policy: health care, cash benefits provided through Supplemental Security Income (SSI), employment, and asset building and wealth protection.
5. Gyasi wrote a blog for the Association for Autism and Neurodiversity (AANE) and was in an editorial with the Boston Globe editorial:
- [Don't make it impossible for people with disabilities to save money.](#)
  - [Looking Both Ways: Standing at the Intersection of Race & Disability.](#)
    - Kathy: Disability Employment subcommittee could write a blog post or editorial to raise awareness.
    - Gyasi shared that he was asked by the Arc of MA Government Affairs Maura Sullivan to be interviewed and speak about his story on asset limits. He has been using this editorial to educate legislators.
      - The Federal SSI Savings Penalty Act has been resubmitted to the House and Senate, [House Bill 5408](#) and [Senate Bill 2767](#).
    - The AANE speaks more about how the financial strain of asset limits has a particular impact on people who are at the intersection of race, gender, and class.

6. Debrief on the [National Disability Employment Awareness Month Commission's panels](#)

- Panels were well attended and well received.
- All panels have been recorded and can be accessed [here](#).
- Will we be sending out a survey?

7. Review FY24 goals and establish next steps.

- Update on Action Items from August subcommittee meeting
  - MA as a Model Employer
    - Kathy reached out to Joe Bellil at Easter Seals who referred her to Massachusetts Office on Disability. Kathy will be following up on this.
  - Supplier Diversity Office
    - Imene will be meeting with them this week on a possible presentation.
  - Employer engagement goal
    - Next meeting, come with an idea and/or contact to identify and facilitate at least one opportunity (e.g., event, speaking engagement, information dissemination) to engage and educate at least 100 small and medium businesses/employers on the value of including people with disabilities in the workplace, available community resources, and recognition of effective employer practices.
      - ➔ The subcommittee would be invited to different employers.
      - ➔ Gyasi is developing a slide presentation to reach out to companies.

8. Adjournment

**Next Meeting Date**

The next meeting of the Disability Employment Subcommittee will be held on:  
**Monday, January 29, 2024 at 12:00 pm.**