

**Date of Meeting:** December 5, 2022

**Start Time:** 12:00 pm

**Location:** Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Gyasi Burks Abbott – Self Advocate Faculty, LEND Program, Boston Children’s Hospital
2	Oswald Mondejar – Senior Vice President of Mission and Advocacy, Spaulding Network (MGB)
3	Representative Matthew Muratore – Massachusetts House of Representatives
4	Kathy Petkauskos (Chair) – Director, Work Without Limits at UMass Chan Medical School
5	Carl Richardson – ADA Coordinator, Massachusetts State House
6	Chris White – CEO & President, Road to Responsibility, INC

### **Welcome, Roll Calls, and Introductions – 12:05**

- Chair Kathy Petkauskos opened the meeting with welcome remarks and allowed each subcommittee member to introduce themselves.

### **Discussion of Subcommittee Goals -12:10**

- Chair Petkauskos read the charge of the subcommittee and asked if anyone would like to put forth any changes. The charge is as follows: “This subcommittee will collect data and analyze initiatives that increase employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities in private employment and in state government.” No subcommittee members objected.

### **Inspirational Quote to Inspire our Work -12:18**

- Chair Petkasukos read the following quote from the WorkAbility Subcommittee Report, “As a progressive pioneer, MA ushered in universal healthcare and marriage equality to our country. I hope it can also offer more equitable work/wage options and protections for those of us with a disability.”
- Chair Petkauskos offered for subcommittee members to take turns submitting inspirational quotes to read at future meetings. Subcommittee members agreed.

### **Recap of Last Subcommittee Meeting – 12:20**

- Discussion of WorkAbility Subcommittee Report:  
[https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oArxA5omVYb\\_XppXUOC9jpJlDZdnoV/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1oArxA5omVYb_XppXUOC9jpJlDZdnoV/view)
  - Due to problems accessing the subcommittee report from the link in the agenda, subcommittee members will review the WorkAbility Subcommittee Report for the next meeting (1/9/23) and submit their top priorities from the report. Representative Garlick’s staff will work with Chair Petkauskos to create a spreadsheet with everyone’s priorities from the report, as well as any updates that have been made to those priorities.

## **Identify Potential Buckets of Work in WorkAbility for the Subcommittee – 12:30**

- Gyasi put forth a suggestion to review a federal bill known as the *Savings Penalty Elimination Act* (<https://www.portman.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/portman-brown-introduce-bip-artisan-legislation-reform-supplemental-security>) that would raise the asset limit of individuals with disabilities from \$2,000 to \$10,000 if single or \$15,000 if married, to be eligible for Supplemental Security Income (SSI).
- Gyasi also put forth a suggestion to review a program that is a part of the state Medicaid buy in program in Maryland known as the Employed Individuals with Disabilities Program (<https://health.maryland.gov/mmcp/eid/Pages/Home.aspx>). This program is used to provide Medicaid benefits to working individuals with disabilities.
  - Both suggestions help mitigate the issue of individuals with disabilities not wanting to work because they would forgo their SSI, and many times that provides more income than a job.
  - There is interest from subcommittee members to reach out to Toni Wolf, who is the Chair of the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission and has been in communication with Maryland about this program.
- Education surrounding benefits to employers for hiring individuals with disabilities was another subject that generated interest among subcommittee members. There is a workforce shortage that is hurting employers, and they could find relief by exploring hiring individuals with disabilities.
  - Chair Petkauskos shared that she has a presentation that debunks myths surrounding individuals with disabilities working and losing their benefits and will share that information with fellow subcommittee members before the next meeting. Chris shared that one the barriers he finds for getting disabled people into the workforce is their guardians are worried about the loss of benefits. Subcommittee members are exploring possibilities to share the facts of Chair Petkauskos' presentation to dispel these myths.
  - Employers have biases that prevent them from hiring individuals with disabilities, but there are free resources that can help employers learn more about hiring individuals with disabilities.
  - Individuals with disabilities should be able to have meaningful careers and have the ability to move up the ladder, not just be relegated to entry level positions.
  - Employers may be more willing to listen due to the workforce shortage, the subcommittee just need a message.
- Potential ideas to help employ more individuals with disabilities
  - The subcommittee suggests holding a webinar for employers that can be used as a resource for learning more about hiring individuals with disabilities. Together the subcommittee and employers can navigate barriers to employment for individuals with disabilities.
  - Suggestion of making tax credits for businesses who hire individuals with disabilities more well known to employers. Does not include non-profits, but suggestions

included a grant to help mitigate the costs of accommodation for hiring individuals with disabilities.

- o Invite business organizations to subcommittee meetings to hear and share ideas on how to address this issue.
- o Create a website that employers and individuals with disabilities can access that can serve as an information resource.
- o Restart the State House internship program that makes an effort to hire individuals with disabilities.
- o Discuss these issues with Representative Garlick to get feedback.

#### **Next Meeting Date**

- The next meeting of the Disability Employment Subcommittee will be held on Monday January 9<sup>th</sup> at 12:00 pm.

#### **Adjournment – 1:00**