

**Massachusetts Commission for the Blind
2nd Annual Virtual Open House
In Recognition of International Day of Persons w/
Disabilities
“Accessibility Standards & the ADA”
Friday December 3, 2021
10am to 12pm**

- **Welcome Address**
Thelma Williams
MCB Northeast Regional Director (Region 3)
- **Moderators**
Jay Rufo
MCB MetroWest Regional Director (Region 4)

Carla Kath
MCB Director of Communications
- **Commissioner’s Remarks**
Commissioner David D’Arcangelo
- **Regional Advisory Committee Remarks**
Kayla Bentas
- **Special Guest Remarks**
Elizabeth Denniston
EOHHS Undersecretary for Human Services
- **Poll Questions (2)**
- **Keynote Speaker**
Julia O’Leary, J.D.
General Counsel, MA Office on Disability

- **Testimonials**
Ursula Santone
Brenda Clark
- **Special Remarks**
Salmaan Kapadia
Board President, Lowell Association for the Blind
- **Musical Selection (video)**
Tina Luce
Region 3 RAC Member
- **Panel Discussion**

Moderator
Michael Festa
State Director, AARP

Panel:
Peter Farkas
Executive Director, MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board

Mary Mahon-McCauley
Executive Director, MA Office on Disability

Rachel H. Tanenhaus, MPH
ADA Coordinator/Executive Director, Cambridge
Commission for Persons with Disabilities

Lisa Orgettas
Executive Director, Disability Resource Center
- **Q & A Session w/ Keynote Speaker & Panelists**
- **Poetry Reading (TBA)**

- **Testimonials**
Elaine Aufiero
George Kamara
Sindy Argueta
- **Poll Question (1)**
- **Closing Remarks**
Elizabeth Cannon
Executive Director, Lowell Association for the Blind

Thank You!

Presenters Bios

Peter Farkas (Panelist)

Since 2017, Peter has been the Executive Director of the MassHire Greater Lowell Workforce Board. He has over 15 years of workforce development experience designing and implementing workforce development programs in various capacities at both the career center and workforce board levels. He holds a Bachelor of Arts from UMass Amherst and a Master of Business Administration from Suffolk University. He was born and raised in the Berkshires and currently resides in Tewksbury.

peter.farkas@masshiregreaterlowell.com

Michael Festa (Panel Moderator)

As State Director for AARP Massachusetts, Festa leads the development and delivery of AARP's community programs, advocacy and information for its more than 750,000 members aged 50 and older in the Commonwealth. Festa served in Gov. Deval Patrick's Cabinet as the Secretary of Elder Affairs from 2007-2009, and previously in the Massachusetts House of Representatives from 1999-2007. As State Representative, Festa spearheaded the "Equal Choice for Senior and Disabled Persons" law and led successful efforts to increase state and federal funding for home care, long term care and elder protective services. Mike was also President & CEO of the Carroll Center for the Blind in Newton, Massachusetts from 2010-2012. Festa began his career as an Assistant District Attorney in Middlesex County and had a longstanding law practice in his hometown of Melrose. He also served in Melrose government for 12 years as an Alderman at Large and School Committeeman.

mfesta@aarp.org

Mary Mahon-McCauley (Panelist)

Mary has been the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) since the fall of 2019. She has 34 years of experience working in the field of disabilities having been employed at the Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) in a variety of capacities including Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor, Job Placement Specialist, and Area Director. She has multiple disabilities including blindness and substance use disorder. Mary has lived with a progressive eye disease

since childhood which crossed over into legal blindness at age 17 and has lived a sober life since age 24. She holds a BA in Sociology and a M.Ed. in Rehabilitation Counseling from the University of Massachusetts at Boston.

marymahon.mccauley@mass.gov

Julia O’Leary, J.D. (Keynote Speaker)

Julia joined the Massachusetts Office on Disability as General Counsel in April 2021. She has 7 years of experience as an attorney with the Executive Branch, having served most recently as Director of Labor Relations and Deputy General Counsel for the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Julia has a JD from University of Wisconsin Law School, and a BA in Sociology and French Studies from Smith College. Julia grew up in Madison, Wisconsin, where she first got involved with disability rights working at nonprofits that advocated for inclusive housing and employment for people with disabilities. She interned with Disability Rights Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Protection and Advocacy agency, throughout law school, and is thrilled to continue her work on disability rights at MOD.

julia.e.oleary@mass.gov

Lisa Orgettas

Lisa has over 25 years of experience as an accomplished human services management leader and has developed and implemented several quality not-for-profit human service programs. Currently Ms. Orgettas is the Executive Director of the Disability Resource Center, a cross-disability organization providing services to any person, regardless of age, who identifies as having a disability. Previous to this, Lisa was the Director of Community Services at North Shore Elder Services and was the Executive Director of Spectrum Adult Day Health programs.

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Rachel H. Tannenhaus, MPH (Panelist)

Rachele is the ADA Coordinator/Executive Director of the Cambridge Commission for Persons with Disabilities. She spent nearly twelve years as a Program Coordinator in the Health and Disability Program at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, helping to ensure that people of all abilities and across the lifespan have access to health care. She has provided technical assistance on the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), accessible information technology and other access-related topics for over twenty years and has been participating in disability awareness panels since she was ten years old. She has worked as an information specialist on the ADA technical assistance lines at the New England ADA Center and the US Department of Justice. She holds degrees from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst and the Boston University School of Public Health and has served on several municipal disability commissions and on the Alumni Council for the Guide Dog Foundation for the Blind. She is a current member of the Massachusetts Commission for the Blind's Regional Advisory Council for Region 3.

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Special Acknowledgements

David D’Arcangelo, Commissioner

John Oliveira, Deputy Commissioner

MCB Northeast (Region 3) Regional Advisory Council

Jay Rufo, MCB MetroWest Regional Director (Region 4)

Amy Doherty, MCB Northeast Vocational Rehab Counselor

Tracey Fitzpatrick, MCB Northeast Social Rehab Counselor

Michelle Murray, MCB Northeast Administrative Assistant

MCB Northeast Region 3 Staff

Carla Kath, MCB Director of Communications

Samantha Linden, MCB Director of Training

Kamilia Drogosz, MCB HR Liaison/Diversity Officer/ADA Coordinator

Adrienne Callaghan, MCB Coordinator of Programs & Services

Nina Kagan, MCB Boston Children’s Social Worker (Region 6)

Elizabeth Cannon, Executive Director Lowell Association for the Blind & Region 3 RAC Member

Tina Luce, Inspirational Recording Artist & Regional Advisory Council Member

Testimonial Speakers

Ursula Santone

Brenda Clark

Elaine Aufiero

George Kamara

Sindy Argueta