

Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Commission Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, March 12, 2025

Time: 11:00 AM – 12:30 AM

Place: Hybrid

In Person Hearing Room A1

MA State House

24 Beacon Street,

Boston, MA, 02108

Access to the recording: [link](#)

Members Present	
1	Gyasi Burks-Abbott – LEND Faculty, Boston Children’s Hospital/UMass Boston Institute for Community Inclusion
2	Charles Carr – Disability Policy Consortium
3	Honorable Representative Denise Garlick – House of Representatives
4	Craig Hall – Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
5	Honorable Representative Kay Khan – House of Representatives
6	Andrew Levrault – Disabled Persons Protection Commission
7	Ann Lynch – Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office
8	Reginal Marshall – Advocates
9	Kathy Petkauskos – University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
10	Carl Richardson – State House ADA Coordinator
11	Lexi Semanchik – State Treasurer’s Office
12	Rachel Stanton – State Treasurer’s Office
13	Christopher White – Road to Responsibility, Inc (RTR)
Members Not Present	
14	Honorable Representative Gerard Cassidy – House of Representatives
15	Nancy Garr-Colzie – Member, Worcester Disability Commission; Board Chair, Center for Living and Working
16	Oswald Mondejar – Mucho Gusto Consulting
17	Felix Martinez
18	Bridget Murphy – Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin
19	Senator Patrick O’Connor – Senate
20	Angela Ortiz – MA Health Council
21	Meghan Todd – City of Framingham

Proceedings

Agenda:

1. Welcome, Roll Call, Approval of December 2024 Meeting Minutes
 - Motion to approve the minutes
 - Minutes approved unanimously
2. [Civil Rights in Healthcare](#), a presentation by Commissioner Ann Lynch, Assistant Attorney General, Disability Rights Coordinator, Civil Rights Division, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
 - Presentation highlights:
 - Section 504 and Disability Discrimination
 - o Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 prohibits discrimination based on disability by entities receiving federal funds, including healthcare providers.
 - o A legal challenge involving 17 states questions recent federal regulations that interpret gender dysphoria as a disability under Section 504.
 - Federal and State Protections
 - o Federal laws including but not limited to Section 504 and the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) protect against disability discrimination in healthcare settings.
 - o Massachusetts law prohibits discrimination in public accommodations, encompassing healthcare facilities, and offers additional protections beyond federal statutes.
 - Reasonable Accommodations
 - o Healthcare providers are required to offer reasonable accommodations to patients with disabilities, such as accessible facilities and effective communication methods.
 - Language Access
 - o Under Title VI of the Civil Rights Act, healthcare providers must ensure language access for individuals with limited English proficiency, which includes offering interpreter services and translated materials.
 - Immigration Enforcement in Healthcare Settings
 - o The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office provides guidance to healthcare facilities on handling immigration enforcement actions, emphasizing the protection of patient rights and confidentiality.
 - o Links: <https://bit.ly/41fXN8k>, <https://bit.ly/4h17MUZ>
 - o Other guidance on a variety of topics available on the AGO's website: <https://www.mass.gov/info->

- [details/resources-for-immigrants-in-massachusetts, https://bit.ly/4i8bi0X](https://bit.ly/4i8bi0X) (DEIA in higher education)
 - AGO's website: <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/office-of-the-attorney-general>
 - AGO's hotline: (617) 727-2200
 - Ongoing Legal Developments
 - The Massachusetts Attorney General's Office is monitoring ongoing litigation related to Section 504 and is prepared to take action to defend the civil rights of Massachusetts residents.
 - Discussion:
 - Access to healthcare remains a significant challenge despite existing laws.
 - Individuals experiencing barriers are encouraged to first speak with their healthcare provider or accessibility coordinator. If unresolved, complaints can be filed with the federal Office for Civil Rights, the Attorney General's Office, or the Massachusetts Commission Against Discrimination.
 - Not all complaints are honored, and systemic barriers persist.
 - Commissioners expressed interest in sharing this information with the LTSS Subcommittee.
- 3. [Education and Information on Developments at the Federal level concerning People with Disabilities](#), a presentation by Commissioner Craig Hall, Executive Director, Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
 - Presentation highlights:
 - An automatic 1% rescission in federal discretionary spending was explained.
 - The current continuing resolution includes no program increases, only prior-year funded programs continue to receive funding.
 - Discretionary funds are being reduced, with implications for Medicaid waiver programs.
 - The definition of developmental disability was discussed as defined by federal law ([Public Law 106-402](#)).
 - Several federal bills impacting people with disabilities are pending, including proposals to add work requirements for Medicaid and SNAP.
 - The [MDDC website](#) offers timely updates on federal policy developments.
 - Commissioners emphasized the importance of continuing this type of policy briefing.
- 4. Ad Hoc Discussion
 - The Chair noted that a draft ad hoc policy will be circulated by Imene for review.

- Commissioners expressed support for establishing clear guidelines for ad hoc activities.

5. Subcommittees Reports – Activities Reported from December 2024 through March 2025

- Report of the Workforce Supports subcommittee and highlights:

Meetings Held:

- January 16: Reorganized the subcommittee, confirmed FY25 goals:
 - Strengthen stakeholder collaboration to address workforce shortages.
 - Analyze existing workforce data to guide strategic efforts.
 - Prepare for changes under a new federal administration.
 - Expand membership and cross-committee collaboration.
 - Explore disability employment and youth workforce development initiatives, including a potential panel on PCA and job coach experiences.
- February 13: Hosted [CHIA](#) to review findings from their 2023 workforce survey. Key challenges included applicant shortages, salary concerns, and burnout. CHIA will return to share updated data.

Upcoming Meetings & Invited Guests:

- 4/17/25 – Ellen Attaliades, ADDP (2024 Workforce Metrics Survey)
- 5/15/25 – TBD
- 8/28/25 – Dr. Patricia Yu, EOHHS (state workforce policy update)
- 11/13/25 – TBD
- We're also reaching out to the Attorney General's Office for future participation.

- Report of the LTSS/HE subcommittee and highlights:

- The subcommittee is planning a roundtable with subject matter experts to discuss health equity and its intersection with disability. Attendance will be by invitation.
- Emphasis was placed on the importance of PCAs in supporting employment for people with disabilities.
- Upcoming Meetings from 11am to 12pm
 - August 25, 2025
 - November 17, 2025

- Report of the Disability Employment subcommittee and highlights:

- Meetings Held: Two (January 27 and February 24)
- Highlights and Accomplishments:
 - Elected new co-chairs (Gyasi Burks-Abbott and Rachel Stanton)

- Engaged with MassAbility, EOLWD, and CommCorp to discuss the impact of the benefits cliff on disability employment:
- Data from DER's dashboard shows steep benefit losses when individuals move to full-time work, influencing the prevalence of part-time roles.
- Research projects on SSA benefits by Brandeis and others were halted due to federal grant changes.
- Progress on Learn to Earn data use has been slower than expected due to technical challenges.
- Ongoing and Upcoming Work:
 - Develop a brief internal newsletter summarizing subcommittee work to promote transparency and reduce duplication.
 - Partner with the Workforce Supports Subcommittee on a panel focused on youth, PCAs, and inclusive employment.
 - Continue outreach for an employer video series with HRD, MA ODEO, and TRE.
 - Plan a meeting with Christine Tosti to explore barriers facing disabled individuals with criminal records.
- Next Meeting: April 28, 2025
- Additional Notes:
- Oz Mondejar is coordinating with CommCorp on a potential presentation regarding youth employment funding.
- Upcoming Meetings from 12pm to 1pm
 - August 25, 2025
 - November 17, 2025

6. Commissioner Announcements:

- Executive Board elections will be held in June.
- Commissioners inquired about the process for filling vacancies. It begins with the appointing authorities, followed by selections from a qualified applicant pool if necessary.
- Upcoming events mentioned:
 - [Paul Spooner Summit](#) (September 29 – October 1, 2025)
 - Status of Commonwealth Care event hosted by BCIL and DPC (March 18, registration required)
 - Autism Advocacy Day (April 8)
 - DeafBlind Awareness Day (April 9)

7. 2025 Meeting Dates and New Time (11am to 12:30pm)

- June 11
- September 10
- November 5 11-12 (tentative) annual report review
- December 10

8. Adjournment