

Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Commission Meeting Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, June 11, 2025

Time: 11:00 am – 12:30 am

Place: Hybrid

In Person Hearing Room 222

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	The Honorable Denise Garlick – House of Representatives
4	Craig Hall – Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
5	Representative Vanna Howard – House of Representatives
6	Andrew Levrault – Disabled Persons Protection Commission
7	Representative Jay Livingstone – House of Representatives
8	Representative John Marsi – House of Representatives
9	Oswald Mondejar – Mucho Gusto Consulting
10	Bridget Murphy – Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin
11	Senator Patrick O’Connor – Senate
13	Kathy Petkauskos – University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
14	Carl Richardson – State House ADA Coordinator
15	Representative Lindsay Sabadosa – House of Representatives
16	Lexi Semanchik – State Treasurer’s Office
17	Rachel Stanton – State Treasurer’s Office
18	Meghan Todd – City of Framingham
19	Christopher White – Road to Responsibility, Inc (RTR)
Members Not Present	
20	Nancy Garr-Colzie – Member, Worcester Disability Commission; Board Chair, Center for Living and Working
21	Ann Lynch – Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office
22	Reginal Marshall – Advocates
23	Felix Martinez
24	Angela Ortiz – MA Health Council
25	Leo Sarkissian – The Arc of Massachusetts

Proceedings

1. Welcome, Roll Call, Approval of December 2024 Meeting Minutes

- Representative Vanna Howard from the 17th Middlesex Ward 3, Ward 4 Precincts 1, 2, 3A, Ward 5 Precincts 1, 2, 3, 4, Ward 6, Precincts 3, 4A, Ward 7 Precinct 3A, and Ward 8 Precinct 4A, of the city of Lowell, and Precinct 1, of the town of Tewksbury, both in the county of Middlesex introducing herself.
- Representative Lindsay Sabadosa from the 1st Hampshire towns of Chesterfield, Cummington, Goshen, Hatfield, Plainfield, Westhampton, Williamsburg, and Worthington, and the city of Northampton, all in the county of Hampshire introduces herself.
- Farewell message from Honorable Representative Kay Khan was shared.
- Representative Jay Livingstone from the 8th Suffolk Ward 3 Precincts 5, 9, 17, Ward 4 Precincts 6, 7, 8, 11, 12, Ward 5 Precincts 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9, 11, and 15, of the city of Boston, in the county of Suffolk introduces himself.
- Representative John Marsi from the 6th Worcester Precincts 1, 2, 3, and 4A, of the town of Charlton, the town of Dudley, the city known as the town of Southbridge, and Precinct 1, of the town of Spencer, all in the county of Worcester introduces himself.
- Chair Garlick on behalf of the Commission extended appreciation to the legislators who have served and supported the Commission's work: the Honorable Gerald Cassidy, the Honorable Mathew Muratore, and the Honorable Kay Khan. Former Representative Kay Khan has submitted written remarks to the Commission, which was shared in the meeting chat.
- Motion to approve the March minutes
 - Minutes approved unanimously

2. Elections

- The Commission proceeded to officer elections. Commissioners were notified by email on May 27, 2025, inviting nominations and self-nominations for officer positions. The deadline to submit nominations to the Executive Director was Monday, June 9 at 5pm.
 - The following nominations were received:
 - o Chair – Representative Denise Garlick
 - o Vice Chair – Chris White
 - o Treasurer – Carl Richardson
 - o Secretary – Oz Mondejar
- No other nominations were submitted. All nominees confirmed their willingness to serve.
- Commissioner Gyasi Burks-Abbott moved to approve the slate of officers Representative Denise Garlick as Chair, Chris White as Vice Chair, Carl Richardson as Treasurer, and Oz Mondejar as Secretary in one vote.
- The motion was seconded. Chair Garlick called for any discussion. Hearing none, a roll call vote was conducted by Executive Director Imene Bouziane Saidi. The motion carried unanimously. The officer slate was

approved as presented.

3. Commissioners Updates

- Chair Garlick shared the following update on the Commission's progress and vision as the Executive Board concludes its first term:
 - The Executive Board, in partnership with Executive Director Imene Bouziane Saidi, completed a productive and impactful first term, laying a strong foundation for the Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities.
 - Key accomplishments include:
 - o Robust leadership and participation by Commissioners across three subcommittees: Disability Employment; Workforce Supports, and Long-Term Services and Supports and Health Equity, each advancing priorities in inclusive employment, direct care workforce support, and equitable healthcare access.
 - o Submission of three annual reports and testimonies, contributing to successful budget advocacy and ongoing engagement with other Commissions established in 2021.
 - o Hosting two annual National Disability Employment Awareness Month events and a range of subcommittee-led discussions, panels, and workshops.
 - o Strengthening collaboration with Executive Branch agencies to center the voices and needs of people with disabilities in government planning and policy.
- Looking ahead, the Executive Board is focused on developing a formal succession and mentoring process, establishing an Advisory Board, and launching regional engagement efforts to "meet the moment" by deepening statewide connections and responding to threats to disability.
- Shared concern about the decline in DEI-related employer engagement due to federal executive actions. Membership in DEI networks is dropping, and some programs are being paused or restructured. Although some work incentive contracts remain stable, DEI language and data collection requirements have been removed.
- Expressed concern about significant federal Medicaid cuts, with projections of a \$1 billion impact on MassHealth. Anticipated consequences include reduced access to community-based services such as the Personal Care Assistance program and potential shifts toward institutional care.
- Raised concerns about the impact of immigration policy changes on the direct care workforce. Over 100 staff at one provider organization have lost work authorization, affecting services for participants. Many of these workers have lived and paid taxes in the U.S. for years.
- Highlighted two urgent policy developments:
 - Cuts to university disability programs; and

- Department of Energy rule changes eliminating requirements for accessibility standards in building construction.
- Reported that multiple states have voted to eliminate Section 504 protections, citing gender identity and dysmorphia. Advocates are mobilizing in response to these threats to federal disability rights law.
- Emphasized the power of collective advocacy and suggested integrating personal stories and shared concerns into Commission communications. Encouraged stronger collaboration with partners to amplify messaging.
- Noted the increasing normalization of inflammatory and ableist rhetoric in media and public discourse, especially targeting immigrants and disabled individuals. Encouraged stronger responses and direct engagement.
- Chair acknowledged all updates and emphasized the Commission's responsibility as a convener and communicator. Expressed openness to facilitating further convenings for Commissioners to share critical information and respond to ongoing threats.
- Reiterated the importance of timely information sharing. Commissioners were invited to send relevant updates or advocacy links to Commission staff for broader distribution.

4. Subcommittees Reports

- **Disability Employment Subcommittee Report (April–June 2025)**
 - Hosted a presentation with two veterans from the Massachusetts Treasury who discussed stigma and barriers to employment for veterans with disabilities.
 - Commonwealth Corp presented on its Employment Program for Young Adults with Disabilities, including 2024–2025 data and current grantees.
 - Planning continued for the “Strength in Support” event in collaboration with Workforce Supports. More info can be accessed [here](#).
 - Co-Chairs met with a self-advocate regarding barriers faced by incarcerated individuals with disabilities seeking employment.
 - Upcoming meetings scheduled for 8/25 and 11/17.
- **Workforce Supports Subcommittee Report (April–June 2025)**
 - Held informational sessions with AAG Lauren Moran (Fair Labor Division) and Deputy Chief Ethan Marks (Health Care Division) of the AG's Office on immigration protections and health care enforcement.
 - Resources from those sessions have been posted to the Commission's website.
 - Co-hosted the “Strength in Support” networking event on June 23 with the Disability Employment Subcommittee. More info can be accessed [here](#).
 - Upcoming meeting on August 28 with Dr. Patricia Yu (EOHHS) on health care workforce initiatives.

- Seeking additional members and engaging presenters to expand impact.
- **Term Services & Supports and Health Equity Subcommittee Report (April–June 2025)**
 - PCA Program Update: Leslie Darcy shared an update on the PCA program review. Executive offices are required to report to the Legislature by March 7. A consensus was reached on three key items, now under legislative review. The report also covers additional LTSS programs.
 - The subcommittee noted positive collaboration with executive agencies, recognizing the Commission’s contributions to planning and policy development.
 - The subcommittee is researching how health equity intersects with long-term services and supports. Plans include gathering data, holding panels, and including findings in the Commission’s annual report.
 - Subcommittee noted serious concerns about MassAbility program cuts to vocational rehabilitation and youth/pre-employment programs, which impact internship opportunities and early workforce engagement.
 - Commissioners were reminded that the May roundtable event on health equity was recorded and shared with everyone. Access the recording [here](#).

5. Commissioner Announcements

- An upcoming [Disability Pride event](#) hosted by Boston Center for Independent Living, the Boston Commission for Persons with Disabilities, and other partners will take place on July 23 to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the Americans with Disabilities Act. The ADA 35 Rally and March will highlight intersectional connections with other communities.
- Plans to establish an advisory board to broaden and complement the Commission’s work by including new voices, particularly from underrepresented sectors such as business. Members were asked to suggest areas where additional perspectives are needed.
- Proposal to travel to different regions of the Commonwealth, leveraging Commissioners’ local expertise and networks to convene relevant stakeholders. A toolkit will be developed over the summer to guide Commissioners in leading outreach efforts within their areas of expertise as part of the “Meeting the Moment” initiative.
- An upcoming event will feature a discussion with state agency disability leaders and an international guest from the German Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs.
- The [Generational Leadership Summit](#) will return in September, with applications open and financial sponsorships still being sought to support the expanded format, which includes alumni participation.

6. Adjournment

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

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