



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

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, June 3, 2026

Time: 11:00 am – 12:30 pm

Place: Hybrid

In Person Hearing Room 222

MA State House

24 Beacon Street,

Boston, MA, 02108

Access to the recording: [recording](#)

Members Present	
1	Gyasi Burks-Abbott – LEND Faculty, Boston Children’s Hospital/UMass Boston Institute for Community Inclusion
2	The Honorable Denise Garlick
3	Victoria Gill – Disabled Persons Protection Commission
4	Craig Hall – Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
5	Senator Vanna Howard – Senate
6	Rachel Kaprielian – Triangle, Inc.
7	Representative Jay Livingstone – House of Representatives
8	Ann Lynch – Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office
9	Regina Marshall – Advocates
10	Representative John Marsi – House of Representatives
11	Oswald Mondejar – Mucho Gusto Consulting
12	Bridget Murphy – Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin
13	Kathy Petkauskos – University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
14	Carl Richardson – State House ADA Coordinator
15	Representative Lindsay Sabadosa – House of Representatives
16	Leo Sarkissian – The Arc of Massachusetts
17	Rachel Stanton – State Treasurer’s Office
Members Not Present	
18	Charles Carr – Disability Policy Consortium
19	Nancy Garr-Colzie – Your Access Advocates
20	Senator Patrick O’Connor – Senate
21	Angela Ortiz – MA Health Council
22	Lexi Semanchik – State Treasurer’s Office

23	Meghan Todd – City of Framingham
24	Christopher White – Road to Responsibility, Inc (RTR)

Proceedings

1. Welcome, Roll Call, Approval of March Meeting Minutes
 - Motion to approve March meeting minutes was made and seconded.
 - Motion approved.
2. Message from the Chair
 - Commissioner Mondejar provided an update on the Commission's *Meeting the Moment* community engagement series.
 - The Commission thanked Senator Vanna Howard, MassAbility, the UMass Lowell team, and partners who helped support the Lowell event. Feedback from attendees was overwhelmingly positive, with more than 80% of survey respondents indicating that the information and resources shared were useful.
 - Attendees highlighted the value of hearing directly from people with disabilities and their families, connecting with organizations through the resource fair, and building new relationships and partnerships within the disability community.
 - Feedback also highlighted the importance of greater engagement from municipalities and local government leaders, particularly given their role as a point of contact for residents seeking services, supports, and information.
 - The Commission announced that the next *Meeting the Moment* community conversation would take place on July 14 in Northampton and recognized Representative Lindsay Sabadosa for working with Commission staff and MassAbility to support planning for the event.
 - The Northampton event will continue the series' focus on providing opportunities for people with disabilities, families, caregivers, local disability commissions, providers, advocates, and community members to share their experiences directly with the Commission and help inform its work.
 - Commissioner Mondejar provided an update on the Commission's National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Celebration, which will take place on Wednesday, October 7, at the Massachusetts State House.
 - The Commission thanked Chairman Livingstone, Senator O'Connor, and Senator Howard for sponsoring the event, which will recognize inclusive employers, highlight promising practices, and celebrate the contributions of workers with disabilities across the Commonwealth.

- The event will also include a panel discussion, tentatively in partnership with MassAbility, focused on artificial intelligence and its impact on people with disabilities.
 - The panel will explore both the opportunities and potential risks of AI, including its potential to support accessibility, independence, and inclusion, as well as concerns related to bias, discrimination, and barriers when AI technologies are not designed and implemented thoughtfully.
 - Additional details about the celebration and panel will be shared as planning continues.
3. Empowering Abilities in Contracting and Employment (EACE) Presentation by Emily Maguire, EACE Program Coordinator at the Massachusetts Supplier Diversity Office
- Presentation highlights:
 - The presentation provided an overview of the Empowering Abilities in Contracting and Employment (EACE) Program and its development from the Individuals with Disabilities Pilot Program, which began in 2018 with a focus on increasing inclusion of the disability community in state procurement through contracting opportunities and workforce development.
 - In 2023, the pilot expanded with the appointment of a program coordinator and renewed collaboration with the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD). On July 1, 2025, the Supplier Diversity Office (SDO) and Operational Services Division (OSD) formally launched the EACE Program.
 - EACE focuses on increasing the representation of disability-owned businesses and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses in state contracting by promoting their participation as statewide contract vendors and subcontractors.
 - The program also has a workforce development focus, supporting vendors with the interviewing, hiring, employment, and retention of applicants with disabilities, with a goal of helping vendors work toward having at least 3% of their workforce be people with disabilities.
 - Another goal is to engage directly with the disability community, agencies, commissions, and nonprofit organizations to help ensure the program has an intentional impact.
 - Looking ahead, the EACE Program is expected to include vendors across seven statewide contracts as of November 1, 2026, representing more than 130 businesses. These contracts cover janitorial services, postage and mailing, cellular services, telecommunications and network services, IT software and services, foreign-language interpretation and translation, and audiovisual services.

- For FY27, EACE has set a goal of achieving a 40% voluntary reporting rate among vendors that are not required to report.
- The program also plans to expand resources for employers and jobseekers with disabilities. An FY27 goal is to develop an enhanced resource list of state agencies and nonprofits that work with employers to bring people with disabilities into their workforce.
- Discussion:
 - Members recognized the program's progress from a pilot to a larger program and asked about the representation of disability-owned businesses and service-disabled veteran-owned businesses. It was noted that there are currently somewhat more service-disabled veteran-owned businesses, with a continued goal of increasing participation by disability-owned businesses.
 - Members discussed the importance of collecting workforce data from participating vendors. It was noted that some businesses may be hesitant to report data when their numbers are low, but the program's approach is to work with vendors to improve their practices and metrics rather than be punitive. This can include connecting businesses with resources to strengthen reasonable accommodation processes and other disability-inclusive employment practices.
 - The discussion emphasized the importance of employment as a pathway to greater independence for people with disabilities and the role of the Commonwealth in modeling inclusive employment practices. A member asked whether other states are using similar approaches that could be replicated.
 - It was noted that Massachusetts is a front-runner in this area and that the program has drawn on training and resources from the UMass Boston Employment First initiative. The EACE goal of at least 3% of a vendor's workforce being people with disabilities was described as mirroring the Commonwealth's internal workforce goal.
 - Members suggested that colleges and universities may also be interested in engaging with EACE.
 - A member asked how the program is expanding across different parts of the state and across different types of employers and work environments to create a broader range of opportunities for people with disabilities.
 - It was explained that the initial contracts were concentrated in areas such as janitorial services, paper goods, and office supplies, which offered a limited range of employment opportunities. The program has since expanded into areas including cellular services, telecommunications and network services, IT software and services, foreign-language interpretation and translation, and

audiovisual services, with the goal of reaching a broader range of industries, businesses, and geographic areas across Massachusetts.

- Members also discussed Massachusetts' approach to supplier diversity and state procurement in light of changes occurring at the federal level. It was explained that Massachusetts procurement law does not allow set-asides based on business type, but the Commonwealth has the Supplier Diversity Program (SDP) and Small Business Purchasing Program (SBPP) to provide avenues to state contracting opportunities for certified businesses. It was noted that access to Commonwealth contracting opportunities has not changed.
- The discussion also noted collaboration with the Massachusetts branch of the federal Small Business Administration (SBA) to connect with businesses that did not recertify federally and explore opportunities for them at the state level.
- Empowering Abilities in Contracting and Employment (EACE) Program : Resource Recommendation Form: [link to form](#)

4. Advisory Council Update

- An update was provided which focused on moving themes identified during the January orientation and May meeting toward action and identifying opportunities for greater collaboration.
- Members shared ongoing work, resources, and barriers across areas including accessibility, employment and workforce pathways, youth transition and education, housing and community inclusion, health equity, transportation, technology and AI, and access to services and supports.
- A key theme was the need to better connect work already happening across organizations, share resources, and create opportunities for members to learn from one another.
- Members expressed interest in strengthening collaboration outside of meetings, including sharing resources through the Commission's website and creating opportunities for Commissioners and Advisory Council members to visit organizations and programs.
- Advisory Council members will also continue participating in Commission initiatives, including two members joining planning efforts for the October NDEAM Celebration.

5. Subcommittee Reports

- Disability Employment Subcommittee Report
 - The Subcommittee met twice during the reporting period. In April, the Lawrence Partnership for Transition to Employment presented findings from a community-led survey on transition to employment. Families identified employment and higher education as goals for their children, while also identifying barriers to participating in the IEP process, including childcare, language access, and understanding the IEP process.

- The May meeting included presentations on the Disability Employment Tax Credit and services available to veterans, including employment, housing, caregiver resources, mental health services, and benefits counseling.
- The Subcommittee also reviewed the SEED Massachusetts Disability Employment Crosswalk Policy Brief. The Crosswalk will continue to be discussed as part of FY27 planning.
- Workforce Supports Subcommittee Report
 - The Subcommittee’s work focused on workforce shortages affecting disability service providers and apprenticeship models as a strategy for recruitment, retention, training, and career development within the human services workforce.
 - On May 28, the Subcommittee hosted “Addressing Workforce Barriers Through Apprenticeships,” a webinar with more than 45 participants from across the human services sector. The session covered how Registered Apprenticeship Programs are developed, training and competency requirements, partnerships with educational institutions, costs and funding opportunities, and existing apprenticeship models in Massachusetts.
 - The discussion also explored opportunities to expand apprenticeship and pre-apprenticeship pathways for people with disabilities and to develop apprenticeship models for positions within the human services sector, including Direct Support Professionals and other critical workforce roles.
 - The Subcommittee planned to follow up with the trade associations that co-sponsored the webinar to explore continued work around apprenticeship programs for the disability services workforce.
- LTSS and Health Equity Subcommittee Report
 - The Subcommittee met twice during the reporting period. In April, the Department of Public Health’s CCATER Center presented on its work providing training and technical assistance to MassHealth CARES for Kids providers serving children with medical complexity and their families. The presentation covered care coordination, health transition and life-course planning, family partnerships, culturally and linguistically responsive services, trauma-informed care, and connections to community resources.
 - Discussion focused on participating healthcare providers, family engagement, mental health supports, funding sustainability, and opportunities to expand collaboration and awareness of the program. Members also discussed workforce shortages, particularly in family engagement roles requiring lived experience and culturally and linguistically responsive support.
 - In May, the Subcommittee heard a presentation on Crisis Standards of Care and healthcare discrimination affecting people with

disabilities, including concerns about the use of life expectancy and Quality Adjusted Life Years (QALYs) in healthcare decision-making and lessons from disability advocacy during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- The discussion also addressed S.869, An Act relative to preventing discrimination against persons with disabilities in the provision of health care, as well as concerns related to DNR practices, Medicaid and home and community-based services, healthcare disparities, and the importance of disability representation in healthcare policy, emergency preparedness, and future crisis planning.

6. Executive Director Report

- The Executive Director provided an update on continued engagement with state agencies, community partners, and advocacy organizations to inform the Commission's work and identify opportunities for collaboration.
- The Commission continued participating in the Intellectual and Developmental Disability and Autism Alliance Working Group, with recent discussions focused on MassHealth, long-term services and supports, workforce challenges, and information sharing across organizations.
- The Executive Director and Chair met with Health Care For All regarding upcoming MassHealth changes and the importance of accessible communication and sharing information with the disability community. The Executive Director also continued participating in the Massachusetts Caregiver Coalition, where discussions have highlighted the different ways caregiving needs appear across families and throughout the lifespan.
- The Executive Director continued outreach related to aging, disability, healthcare, and workforce issues, including conversations with Mystic Valley Elder Services and Caregiver Solutions.
- The Executive Director and Chair presented to Agency Heads and Chiefs of Staff across the Executive Office of Health and Human Services on the Commission's work, its role in bringing community perspectives into agency conversations, and opportunities for collaboration while avoiding duplication of existing efforts.
- Employment and workforce discussions included conversations with MassAbility and AHOi about barriers to employment and advancement for people with disabilities, including the benefits cliff and economic opportunity. Workforce development efforts also included the Commission's apprenticeship webinar in partnership with the Division of Apprentice Standards and Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development.
- The Commission continued exploring artificial intelligence and disability, including accessibility, workforce impacts, privacy, potential unintended consequences, and the importance of including disability perspectives as AI policies and practices develop.

- Work also continued on Meeting the Moment, with positive feedback from the Lowell event informing planning for the next community conversation in Northampton on July 14, as well as continued development of the Advisory Council and opportunities for members to share resources and strengthen cross-sector partnerships.

7. Commissioner Announcements

- Information was shared about the [2026 Medicaid Summit](#), co-hosted by the Council of State Governments, the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council, and CSG East. The virtual summit will be held on June 9, 2026, from 10am to 4pm and is open to the public. The lead sponsors of this summit are Co-Chairs of the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities, Representative Jay Livingstone and Senator Robyn Kennedy and Co-Chairs of the Massachusetts Joint Committee on Health Care Financing, Representative John Lawn and Senator Cindy Friedman. Massachusetts Senator Paul Mark is a co-sponsor and organizer of the summit.
- The Paul Spooner Generational Leadership Summit will continue for a fourth year. The stakeholder groups involved are supporting the planning and funding for the summit. The Summit will be November 16-18, 2026. A new website is underway, which will include an application for the next generation of leaders who will be self-advocates to gain leadership and advocacy skills.
- The need to consider people with disabilities living in rural areas was also highlighted, particularly the transportation and access barriers they may experience.

8. Adjournment

Meeting documents:

- [March 2026 meeting minutes](#)
- [SDO Presentation](#)

Next meeting dates:

- September 16, 2026
- December 2, 2026