

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

**Date of Meeting:** Wednesday, September 10, 2025

**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: [Meeting recording](#)

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

## **Proceedings**

1. Welcome, Roll Call, Approval of June Meeting Minutes, Introduction of new appointment and reappointment announcement
  - Ann Lynch was not present at the June meeting, Imene will make that correction and repost the minutes.
  - Minutes approved unanimously, Ann Lynch, Leo Sarkissian, and Nancy Garr-Colzie abstained.
2. Introduction of newly Governor Appointee Rachel Kaprielian and Governor Reappointments of Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Oz Mondejar, and Angela Ortiz.
3. Message from the Chair:
  - Advisory Council
    - The Commission reviewed the plan to establish an Advisory Council to support and expand its work.
    - The Council will consist of subject-matter experts who can advise on strategic priorities, co-sponsor initiatives, and strengthen connections across key sectors such as healthcare, housing, education, transportation, employment, and business.
    - Members will serve in an advisory, non-voting capacity and will not be appointed Commissioners. Their role is to help amplify the Commission's work and ensure it reflects real-world systems and experiences.
    - Commissioners were asked to suggest candidates with lived experience or demonstrated leadership in disability inclusion, particularly individuals from organizations with statewide or regional reach.
    - Recommendations from commissioners' networks will help shape a strong, diverse Advisory Council.
    - Follow up discussion:
      - Oz will take the lead on moving this initiative forward.
      - Commissioners are encouraged to submit nominations.
      - The Advisory Council policy will be shared again for reference.
      - Nominations should include the person's name, title, and brief background, Imene and Oz will review submissions.
      - Kathy requested that the Advisory Policy and Advisory Council purpose document be resent to the group.
      - Angela emphasized the importance of geographic diversity given varied regional needs.
      - Kathy suggested considering past NDEAM award recipients as possible candidates.
  - Meeting the Moment update
    - The Commission reviewed plans for the [Meeting the Moment](#) statewide community conversation series, the first of four regional

hearings designed to capture perspectives from different geographic areas across Massachusetts.

- The inaugural hearing will take place at Needham Town Hall on Monday, November 4, from 5 to 7pm. This event will include introduction of the Commission's work, a resource fair, and opportunities for community members to share lived experiences.
- Attendees who wish to speak are encouraged to submit written testimony at least 48 hours in advance; additional comments may be taken if time allows.
- Commissioners were reminded that Imene sent out a communication toolkit last week, which includes event details, sample outreach language, media guidance, and a flyer with a QR code for registration.
- Commissioners are asked to help promote the hearing through their networks and to share any media or press contacts who may support outreach and coverage.
- Staff are coordinating with Needham Town Hall to offer a hybrid participation option, with more details to follow.

4. [Medicaid Federal Funding Update Presentation](#) by Jennifer Bertrand, Deputy Director, MA Developmental Disabilities Council

- An overview was provided on recent federal budget reconciliation changes that include significant funding cuts to Medicaid and SNAP.
- Massachusetts' review of upcoming federal Medicaid requirements, six-month eligibility redeterminations and work requirements, estimates that 141,000 to 203,000 MassHealth members could lose coverage, largely due to procedural and documentation barriers.
- The number of uninsured Massachusetts residents under age 65 is projected to increase by 37-65%, rising from 227,000 to between 312,000 and 374,000.
- Cuts to non-mandatory Medicaid services, especially Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS), pose major risks. These optional services are historically the first reduced during state budget shortfalls.
- HCBS services are significantly more cost-effective than institutional care (around \$91,000 per person annually in the community vs. \$289,000 in institutional settings), yet reductions could lead to longer waitlists and increased institutionalization.
- Reduced HCBS funding may also force family caregivers to leave employment, creating financial strain and increasing need for state assistance.
- Discussion:
  - Members noted the scale of the federal funding cuts, expressing concern that reductions to Medicaid and SNAP will directly affect Home and Community-Based Services and the Personal Care Attendant (PCA) workforce.

- It was discussed that many residential human service providers rely on SNAP eligibility to offset state contract costs; reductions in SNAP benefits would shift additional financial pressure onto providers already struggling with cost-of-living and insurance increases.
- Concerns were raised about potential competition among advocacy groups as they work to secure limited resources, and the risk that coalitions may fracture under funding pressures.
- Members emphasized that significant cuts could lead to increased reliance on institutional placements, despite the state lacking the capacity, funding, and infrastructure to expand institutional settings.
- Participants noted how quickly policy changes at the federal level can take effect and the potential speed at which impacts could be felt in Massachusetts.
- There was discussion about key healthcare coalitions and organizations already mobilizing in response to proposed federal changes. Members stressed that community-based disability organizations must be included in these conversations to ensure their needs are represented.
- It was reiterated that non-mandatory Medicaid services are especially vulnerable to cuts, and the disability community will need to coordinate and communicate effectively to respond.
- Members discussed the importance of outreach and partnership-building as part of upcoming Advisory Council efforts to ensure an inclusive and comprehensive response.
- Links shared in the meeting:
  - [Mandatory & Optional Medicaid Benefits](#)
  - [Federal Medicaid Fact Sheet](#)
  - [MDDC Medicaid Resources](#)
  - [Meeting the Moment: SNAP Cuts and the Local Fallout](#)
  - [History Repeats? Faced With Medicaid Cuts, States Reduced Support For Older Adults And Disabled People](#)
  - [Six-Month Redetermination and Work Requirements: Impacts on Health Coverage in Massachusetts](#)

## 5. Subcommittees Reports

- Disability Employment Subcommittee:
  - Held one meeting on August 25, 2025.
  - Co-hosted the [Strength in Support](#) hybrid event at the State House with the Workforce Supports Subcommittee, bringing together youth with disabilities, employers, vendors, job coaches, and advocacy groups.
  - Received a presentation from [Run the Gamut](#), a nonprofit providing a two-year transition and workforce program for young

adults with autism (ages 18–24), with recent federal grant funding and tuition assistance options.

- Prepared a workshop proposal for the [October MA-APSE Employment Matters: Partners for Progress](#) conference, including Commission highlights, inclusive workplace resources, and planned interactive elements. [Presentation link.](#)
- Identified tentative FY26 goals including strengthening collaboration with veterans' services, identifying volunteer/presentation opportunities, and developing a Disability Employment Awareness Month social media campaign.
- Next planned meeting: November 17, 2025 ([presentation from Boston Children's Hospital Disability Alliance ERG](#))
- Workforce Supports Subcommittee:
  - Held one meeting on August 28, 2025.
  - Received an update from the Executive Office of Health & Human Services (EOHHS) Workforce Development Manager on Secretariat-wide efforts supporting human service workers, including grant programs, entry-level recruitment efforts, loan assistance, and training pathways. [EOHHS Workforce Initiatives.](#)
  - Discussed ongoing challenges related to immigration policy changes and Medicaid funding shifts.
  - Began outlining goals for the upcoming fiscal year and considering the possibility of hosting a future workshop or similar event.
  - Next meeting scheduled for November 13, 2025.
  - Future planned [presentation](#): Amy Doyle from the Massachusetts Health Policy Commission's Behavioral Health Workforce Center.
  - Current challenges include finding engaging presenters; the subcommittee is seeking additional members and ideas.
- LTSS and Health Equity Subcommittee:
  - Held one meeting on August 25, 2025.
  - A presentation was provided by the Lurie Institute for Disability Policy, highlighting research aimed at improving home- and community-based services (HCBS), promoting equity, and ensuring research includes the voices of people with disabilities. [Presentation.](#)
  - An overview was provided of the Community Living Data Dashboard, designed with input from people with disabilities and focused on understanding who needs and receives LTSS nationwide. Data shared included an estimated 17.6 million U.S. adults needing LTSS, with only 6.4 million currently receiving Medicaid LTSS, demonstrating substantial unmet need.
  - They are conducting a national study interviewing 30 direct care workers about recruitment and retention challenges (research brief expected next spring). This subcommittee will invite them again once that brief has been published.

- One action item identified: inviting speakers to discuss lessons learned regarding health equity and COVID-19.
- Next meeting scheduled for November 17, 2025.

#### 6. Commissioner Announcements

- All commissioners are invited to all subcommittee meetings.
- Paul W. Spooner Generational Leadership Summit is Sept. 29 - Oct. 1, 2025. We are in year 3 and have followed our innovative model of building upon each class. We have had 20 new participants in each class and in year 3, more than 90% of the program is facilitated and presented by alumni. This is not a “one and done” type of training. Alumni meet during the year and on day 1 received advanced training. The alumni then lead the remainder of the 2 days. Link for more information: [Paul W. Spooner GLS](#)
- Disability Policy Consortium 4<sup>th</sup> award ceremony will be held on October 16<sup>th</sup> Senator Comeford and Rep. Barber will be honored.
- 2025 John Winske Memorial Awards where Commissioner Carl Richardsom will be receiving the Mary Lou Maloney Award for Systemic Change
- MA Health Council will be holding its Annual Awards: Honoring Our Beacons for the Common Good. Link for more info: [MHC Annual Awards](#)
- An upcoming event of interest to the hard-of-hearing community was noted: the Joint Committee on Financial Services will hold a session on September 17 regarding H.3946: An Act relative to health insurance coverage for hearing aids. [More info here.](#)

#### 7. Adjournment:

- Next meeting will be held on December 10, 2025, at 11am.