Assisted Living Advisory Council (ALAC) Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, March 22nd, 2022  
10:00 AM  
\*The meeting was held virtually via Zoom\*

ALAC members: Donna Bucca, EOHHS, Brian Danaher, Mary Jo Boynton, Kim Martone, Tyler Newhall, DHCD, Matt Salmon, and David Santos.   
EOEA staff: Secretary Elizabeth Chen, Assistant Secretary Carole Malone, Matt Casey, Siobhan Coyle, Trisha Marchetti, and William A. Travascio.

1. Call to Order:  
     
   The meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM by Secretary Chen.
2. Welcome and Introductions:   
     
   Secretary Chen thanked members of the Council, stakeholders, and members of the public for attending. She proceeded to introduce the Council’s newest members.  
     
   Donna Bucca was appointed by Secretary Sudders to fill the Executive Office of Health and Human Services’ (EOHHS) seat, previously held by Trisha Marchetti. Donna is the Director of the Assisted Living Ombudsman program within the Office of the Long-Term Care Ombudsman, under the EOHHS umbrella. She has been the State’s Assisted Living Ombudsman for over 20 years.

David Santos was recently sworn-in and fills the open Consumer 2 slot. David has held multiple management and consumer care roles within the aging services and ALR network. He is currently the Senior Community Relations and Development Manager of Senior Living at AccentCare, which is a care provider in Assisted Living Residences (ALR). In addition to his work experience, David is a volunteer with Therapy Dogs International. He has two licensed Therapy dogs that routinely make visits to hospitals and nursing homes.   
  
Tyler Newhall is the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) representative on the Council. He is the agency’s Legislative Director and Policy Development Manager. He fills the role previously held by Ryan Ambrose.

The Secretary noted the current composition of the Council is as follows:

* + 1. Secretary of Elder Affairs.
    2. Donna Bucca is the EOHHS designee.
    3. The Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) has recently appointed Tyler Newhall.
    4. The Consumer seats are held by Kim Martone, David Santos, and Mary Jo Boynton.
    5. The Council’s two Sponsors of ALR seats are held by Brian Danaher from Benchmark Senior Living, and Matt Salmon of Salmon Health and Retirement.
    6. The 9th seat on the Council is still open. The Governor’s office however has a candidate currently in tax and background review.

1. Approval of the Minutes:  
     
   The minutes from the December 14th, 2021 meeting were presented and approved by all those present with Donna Bucca, David Santos, and Tyler Newhall abstaining.
2. EOEA Updates:   
     
   Secretary Chen noted there are now more tools to help us live with COVID-19 as we move from a pandemic to endemic. The best protection is still to get vaccinated. EOEA is working to update its consolidated guidance document, which was sent out in August 2021. The new updated document will reflect changes made by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH), it should be sent to ALRs in the coming weeks.  
     
   Trisha Marchetti, EOEA’s Director of the Assisted Living Certification program, spoke about EOEA resuming certification visits. Over 200 ALRs are overdue for site visits. EOEA is working to rebuild the certification team; in December 2021 Alexandra Newcomb left EOEA followed by Alex Brinkert, in March 2022. The agency is working to list those two positions. In the meantime, EOEA will be contracting with Commonwealth Medicine to have field surveyors come in for a 12-month period to assist with the certification visits. The Commonwealth Medicine team will consist of two nurses and two non-clinical staff. They will be arriving at EOEA in the coming weeks for training, which will cover EOEA’s regulations and general procedures for site visits.   
     
   Matt Salmon asked about rollout of the training to the Commonwealth Medicine staff and whether they will do a trial run. Trisha indicated that training would be done in-house and that they would not be sent out into the field until they are ready. She did not think a trial run would be needed. She noted that Tom Thompson has experience in the field and will be assisting with the trainings. The Secretary added that Trisha has onboarded multiple people in her time at EOEA and has the utmost confidence in her to prepare these new team members.
3. Industry Updates:  
     
   Brian Danaher said that Benchmark has a new residence being constructed in Massachusetts, this speaks to the strong market that there is in the state. He said that Benchmark looks forward to cooperating as site visits get back underway.   
     
   Matt Salmon mentioned that staff are fatigued between turnover and changing guidance, he noted that conversations around staff getting the booster shot have been difficult. The more lead time the industry has before guidance needs to be implemented, the better it is.   
     
   The Secretary said the state is tracking recommendations that are being made to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) and the CDC. EOEA will act as quickly as possible once the information becomes available.   
     
   Elissa Sherman, President of LeadingAge Massachusetts, said the organization held its first in-person conference in two years. 175 people were in attendance. There was a sense of joy among attendees to connect and be together in-person.  
     
   Brian Doherty, President & CEO of Mass-ALA, thanked Trisha for always being a resource to the industry whenever questions arise. Brian asked about the continuation of medical services in ALRs being extended into July. He thanked the Governor for making apprenticeships a priority in the administration’s last year in office. Brian said building career ladders is important and will help to retain staff. Recently, Argentum also took advantage of an apprenticeship grant from the U.S. Department of Labor. Brian added that Mass-ALA met with Congresswoman Lori Trahan (Massachusetts 3rd Congressional District), about a piece of legislation she is sponsoring called the Senior Act. If passed, it would send funds to assisted living providers to help with maintaining the assisted living workforce.   
     
   Secretary Chen mentioned ALRs are not required to have certified nursing aides. The industry can hire home care aides. She mentioned that the state has the first two modules of the PHCAST training available [online](https://www.mass.gov/home-care-aide-training-phcast). The industry can broaden its hiring pool by using this training. The Secretary recently had the privilege of presenting certificates of completion to several high school seniors in Springfield, who will use their newfound knowledge to work summer jobs. She recommended the industry also form relationships with vocational schools as a source of staff.
4. Updates from Consumer Members:  
     
   Kim Martone noted that in-person activities are beginning again, which has been good for the mental state of the residents. She added site visits resuming is a positive step, it will reassure residents and families. Mary Jo Boynton observed that there is a higher level of joy when residents interact with visitors. David Santos echoed that morale among staff is higher. He also recognized the challenges the industry has endured the past two years.
5. Comments from Visitors:   
     
   Gerry Miller expressed concern about the appointments process for the Council. He noted he applied almost a year ago to fill one of the vacancies. He added there was a typo on the meeting posting and therefore joined late; he found the correct link to join in the agenda which was also posted. He also thanked EOEA and the Council for the work they have done during the COVID-19 pandemic.
6. Other items for discussion:  
     
   None.
7. Adjournment:  
     
   The meeting adjourned at 10:37 AM. The next meeting will be held Tuesday, June 28th, 2022 at 10:00 AM.