

OCA Nominating Committee

Meeting Minutes
October 29, 2025
5:00 – 7:00 pm

Date of meeting: Wednesday, October 29, 2025

Start time: 5:00 pm

End time: 7:00 pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Member Votes		Present	Vote I*
1	Kiame Mahaniah – Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) (<i>Chair</i>)	X	X
2	Staverne Miller – Department of Children and Families (DCF) Commissioner	X	X
3	Cecely Reardon – Department of Youth Services (DYS) Commissioner	X	X
4	Beth Lucas – Department of Mental Health (DMH) Acting/Interim Commissioner	-	-
5	Jennifer Valenzuela – Children’s Trust, Executive Director	X	X
6	Linda Sagor – Pediatrician experienced in treating victims of child abuse, designated by the Mass Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics	X	X
7	Neha Sharma – Child Psychiatrist, designated by Mass. Psychiatric Society	X	X
8	Margo Townsley – Child Psychologist, designated Mass. Psychological Association	X	X
9	Meri Viano – Associate Director of the Parent/Professional Advocacy League (PPAL); Representative from Massachusetts Association for Mental Health (MAMH)	X	X
10	Rachel Gwatlney – Representative of organization that advocates for children at risk of abuse designated by Children’s League of Mass (CLM)	X	X
11	Daniel Mahoney – Attorney experienced in care and protection cases designated by the Mass. Bar Association	X	X
12	Sandra Best Bailly – Social Worker designated by the Mass Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers	X	X
13	Kate Shea - Representative of organized labor designated by the president of a collective bargaining unit that represents social workers (SEIU 509)	X	X
14	Amy Nechtem – Person with experience in the juvenile justice system designated by the Chief Justice of the Juvenile Court Department	X	X

* (X) Voted in favor; (O) Opposed; (A) Abstained from vote; (-) Absent from meeting or during vote

Proceedings

Secretary Mahaniah called the meeting to order at 5:00 pm. He welcomed members and thanked them for their willingness to participate in the nominating process. He informed the Committee members are subject to the Open Meeting Law (OML) and that any votes taken during the meeting would be conducted via roll-call vote.

Instructions were provided for managing Zoom logistics:

- Keep microphones muted unless speaking
- Locate and use raise hand feature to indicate a desire to speak

Gabriel Cohen and Casey Chamberlain with EOHHS administered the oath of office to members.

After a round of introductions, two presentations were delivered:

Don Siriani, Chief of the Public Education and Communications Division at the State Ethics Commission, provided the Nominating Committee with a brief overview of the State's Conflict of Interest Law and ethics regulations. He covered ethics principles, conflict of interest, disclosure and recusal obligations, gift rules, confidentiality requirements, and restrictions on political activity and misuse of office. He stressed that members should view the State Ethics Commission as a resource and to reach out directly with questions or concerns related to potential conflicts of interest.

Lauren Cleary, Associate General Counsel with EOHHS, provided an overview of the Open Meeting Law as it relates to the work of the Nominating Committee. She explained the requirements for public access, quorum definition (a simple majority of 8 members), emphasized the importance of transparency in how the Nominating Committee conducts its work and explained the specific limitations related to members' communications (via email, text, and otherwise) outside of a formal meeting on matters which might pertain to the work of the Nominating Committee. She also reviewed executive session criteria and public record obligations.

Secretary Mahaniah spoke about the current Child Advocate, Maria Mossaides, who has served about 10 years as a dedicated, effective, and passionate advocate for vulnerable children. He expressed hope that the Nominating Committee could rise to the level of her aspirations and continue building on her legacy.

Secretary Mahaniah explained that the Nominating Committee's work will be supported by staff from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services, who are not voting members. He then invited Undersecretary Mary McGeown to share an overview of the Office of the Child Advocate including its mission and core responsibilities and an overview of the nominating process. She explained that the Child Advocate is appointed by majority vote of the Governor, Attorney General, and State Auditor from a list of three finalists provided by the Nominating Committee.

She shared information about the upcoming virtual listening session to be held on Wednesday, November 5, 2025 from 6:00 p.m. – 7:30 p.m. to gather information from families, advocates, and service providers about their experiences and priorities for the next Child Advocate.

In response to members' questions about the process for selecting the Child Advocate, Secretary Mahaniah explained that the next meeting would be scheduled shortly and there will be an opportunity for members to discuss the selection process in greater detail.

Vote I to adjourn the meeting: Secretary Mahaniah requested a motion to adjourn and the motion was introduced by a Committee Member and seconded by another Committee Member and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

The meeting was adjourned at 5:48 p.m.

Meeting Materials

1. Ethics Overview Slide Deck
2. Open Meeting Law guide