

**BY-LAWS**  
**of the**  
**MASSACHUSETTS AUTISM COMMISSION**

**ENABLING ACT**

The Massachusetts Autism Commission was created and established by Chapter 226 of the Acts of 2014. The Autism Commission is charged with making recommendations on policies impacting individuals with autistic spectrum disorders, which shall include, but not be limited to, Asperger's syndrome, high functioning autism, Smith-Magenis syndrome and pervasive development disorder. The Commission shall investigate the range of services and supports necessary for such individuals to achieve their full potential across their lifespan, including, but not limited to, investigating issues related to public education, higher education, job attainment and employment, including supported employment, provision of adult human services, post-secondary education, independent living, community participation, housing, social and recreational opportunities, behavioral services based on best practices to ensure emotional well-being, mental health services and issues related to access for families of children with autism spectrum disorder and adults who are from linguistically and culturally diverse communities.

The Commission on autism shall investigate and study the higher education opportunities, employment training opportunities and employment opportunities available to persons with autism spectrum disorder and shall make recommendations in regard thereto. The Commission shall determine the current status of such higher education opportunities, employment training opportunities and employment opportunities including, but not limited to, vocational training programs for teen-aged and young adult persons with autism spectrum disorder and shall make recommendations for providing appropriate higher education, employment training and employment opportunities for the population of residents in the commonwealth who have been diagnosed with autism spectrum disorder. Additionally, the Commission shall review the rise in the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder diagnoses among children in the past 30 years and shall make estimates of the number of children, aged 21 or younger, with autism spectrum disorder who will become adults in the coming decades and the resulting need for employment training and employment opportunities for those individuals and shall recommend a plan-of-action for the commonwealth in regard thereto. The Commission shall file its report with the clerks of the Senate and House of Representatives and the chairs of the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities on or before June 30, 2015.

The Commission on autism shall make an investigation and study of the present, and anticipated future, statewide affordable supportive housing needs for the commonwealth's population of persons with autism spectrum disorder. The Commission shall develop and conduct a statewide housing survey to determine the current status of affordable supportive housing stock for adults with autism spectrum disorder and shall make recommendations in

regard thereto. Additionally, the Commission shall review the rise in the prevalence of autism spectrum disorder diagnoses among children in the past 30 years and shall make estimates of the number of children, aged 21 or younger, with autism spectrum disorder who will become adults in the coming decades and the resulting need for affordable supportive housing for those individuals and shall recommend a plan-of-action for the commonwealth in regard thereto. The Commission shall file its report with the clerks of the Senate and House of Representatives and the chairs of the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities on or before June 30, 2015.

The Commission shall file an annual report, on or before March 1, with the governor, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities and the joint committee on health care financing outlining unmet needs and trends in autism services, supports and treatments for the autism population, including any recommendations for regulatory and legislative action necessary to provide or improve such services or supports. The Commission shall monitor the implementation of its recommendations and update recommendations to reflect current research and service needs as necessary.

## ARTICLE I

### MEMBERSHIP

#### 1.1 Chair

The Chair of the Autism Commission is the Secretary of the Executive Office of Health and Human Services. The Chairperson shall have all of the powers and duties as are commonly incident to the office of Chair. The Chairperson shall establish the agenda for all meetings, in consultation with the Commission's Executive Director. The Chairperson or her designee shall preside over all meetings of the Autism Commission.

#### 1.2 Members

The Autism Commission consists of thirty-five (35) members. In addition to the Chairperson the other members are; 1 member of the house of representatives appointed by the speaker; 1 member of the house of representatives appointed by the minority leader of the house; 1 member of the senate appointed by the senate president; 1 member of the senate appointed by the minority leader of the senate; the Commissioner of developmental services or a designee; the Commissioner of mental health or a designee; the secretary of education or a designee; the director of housing and community development or a designee; the secretary of labor and workforce development or a designee; the Commissioner of the Massachusetts rehabilitation Commission or a designee; the Commissioner of early education and care or a designee; the Commissioner of elementary and secondary education or a designee; the Commissioner of higher education or a designee; the secretary of elder affairs or a designee; the Commissioner of children and families or a designee; the Commissioner of public health or a designee; the director of the office of Medicaid or a designee; 1 person appointed by the secretary of education from the community college

system; the director of the division of autism or a designee; 1 person appointed by the Commissioner of developmental services who shall have clinical knowledge of Smith-Magenis syndrome; and 14 persons to be appointed by the governor, 1 of whom shall have a diagnosis of autism spectrum disorder, 1 of whom shall be a representative of Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts, 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Autism Insurance Resource Center, 1 of whom shall be a representative of Massachusetts Advocates for Children, 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Arc of Massachusetts, 1 of whom shall be a representative of Autism Speaks, Inc., 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Lurie Center and 1 of whom shall be a representative of the Asperger's Association of New England, Inc. Members of the Commission shall be persons with demonstrated interest, experience and expertise in autism and related services and shall serve for a term of 4 years, without compensation. Any member shall be eligible for reappointment. Vacancies shall be filled for the remainder of the unexpired term. Any member may be removed by the governor for cause.

### 1.3 Executive Director

The Executive Director shall be appointed by the Governor from candidates recommended by the committee. The Executive Director may be removed by the governor for cause. The Executive Director shall promote the goals of the Commission and improve Commission functions through the coordination and standardization of programs, operations and procedures. The Executive Director shall have a working knowledge of the autism service delivery system and agencies providing these services, legislative advocacy experience and a personal connection to autism. The Executive Director may: expend appropriated funds together with additional funds from federal grants and other contributions, which may be made available for these purposes; and appoint other necessary personnel for the efficient management of the office. Expenditures for salaries and for other administrative functions shall be approved by the Commission. Duties of the Executive Director shall include, but not be limited to: (i) reporting on the progress of implementation of the 13 recommendations of the March 2013 Massachusetts autism Commission report with periodic benchmarks and cost estimates for a coordinated, system-wide response supporting people of all ages on the autism spectrum; (ii) coordination of Commission meetings; (iii) coordination with relevant state agencies; and (iv) completion of the annual report.

## ARTICLE II

### MEETINGS

#### 2.1 Commission Meetings

The Autism Commission shall meet at least quarterly or as frequently as the Executive Director recommends. The Executive Director will submit a draft annual report to the Commission for its review and comment at least one (1) meeting before it is on the agenda for a vote of acceptance.

## 2.2 Notice of Commission Meetings

Notice of Commission meetings will be provided at least forty-eight (48) hours in advance, along with a copy of the agenda, with the practice being to provide the Commission members with the meeting agenda and materials a week in advance of the meeting. The Executive Director's office will post the meeting dates and times on the Commission's website and provide electronic notice to all of the Commission's members. All Commission meetings are subject to the Open meeting Law. Remote participation by members is not permitted for Commission meetings. Any meeting of the Autism Commission may be cancelled or rescheduled by the Chairperson or Executive Director.

## 2.2 Quorum

A quorum of sixteen (16) members must be present at each Autism Commission meeting in order for the Commission to conduct business. Any votes taken by the Commission require a majority of those present. Any matter to be considered for a vote by the Commission must be submitted to the Chairperson and Executive Director at least one week in advance of a Commission meeting.

# **ARTICLE III**

## SUBCOMMITTEES

### 3.1 Subcommittees

The Executive Director Autism Commission may create subcommittees for any purpose deemed necessary to fulfill its statutory purpose. Any subcommittees shall be advisory for the purposes of making short-term and long-term recommendations to the Autism Commission for its consideration. No action by any subcommittee shall in any way bind the Autism Commission. All subcommittees shall comply with the provisions of the Open Meeting Law, including provisions related to remote participation.

### 3.2 Subcommittee Membership

All subcommittees of the Autism Commission will be chaired by a member(s) of the Autism Commission and/or its Executive Director. The Chair(s) of each sub-committee will work with the Executive Director to establish the schedule of their meetings, set the agenda for the meeting, and preside over the meetings.

### 3.3 Subcommittee Terms

Each sub-committee established by the Commission will serve for a term of one year, without compensation. Each sub-committee member is eligible for reappointment and will take into consideration attendance at previous meetings. The Executive Director, in

consultation with the Commission's Chairperson and members will establish the membership of each sub-committee.

## **ARTICLE IV**

### **AMENDMENTS**

#### **4.1 Amendment to By-Laws**

These By-laws may be amended, added to, altered, or repealed in whole or in part by the affirmative vote of at least 2/3 of the majority twenty-three (23) members of the entire Autism Commission at any meeting of the Autism Commission, provided that notice to the members shall specify the subject matter of the proposed amendment or Article of the By-laws to be affected.