

## **Charge of the Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities**

### **Section 1 of Chapter 253 of the Acts of 2020 ([Link](#))**

Section 74. (a) There shall be a permanent commission on the status of persons with disabilities. The commission shall consist of: 3 persons appointed by the president of the senate; 3 persons appointed by the speaker of the house of representatives; 1 person appointed by the minority leader of the senate; 1 person appointed by the minority leader of the house of representatives; 7 persons appointed by the governor; the attorney general or their designee; the state treasurer or their designee; the state secretary or their designee; the executive director of the disabled persons protection commission or their designee; 1 person from the University of Massachusetts medical school Work Without Limits program; 1 person from the Massachusetts Disability Policy Consortium; 1 person from the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers, Inc.; and 1 person from the Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council.

(b) Members of the commission shall be drawn from diverse racial, ethnic, religious, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression and socio-economic backgrounds, and should have personal experience, professional background or demonstrated interest on issues relating to persons with disabilities. It shall be the goal of the commission to include representation from a broad spectrum of disabilities, as well as perspectives of family members, disability advocacy organizations, human service agencies, regional employment collaboratives and business and labor organizations throughout the commonwealth.

(c) The commission shall be an independent agency of the commonwealth and shall not be subject to the control of any other department or agency. Members of the commission shall be subject to the provisions of chapter 268A as they apply to special state employees.

(d)(1) A member of the commission shall serve a term of 3 years and until a successor is appointed, or the member is reappointed by their appointing or nominating authority.

(2) Vacancies in the membership of the commission shall be filled by the original appointing or nominating authority for the balance of the unexpired term. If the position was filled by a nominating body, the replacement member shall be selected from solicited nominations. If the nominating body or appointing authority does not fill a position, the existing members of the commission shall fill the vacancy from a pool of qualified applicants pursuant to subsection (b).

(3) Nominations for vacancies in the membership shall be solicited through an open application process using a uniform and accessible application, which accommodates candidates of all abilities. Appointments shall be announced not later than April 1 of each year.

(4) The commission shall elect from among its members a chair, a vice-chair, a clerk, a treasurer and any other officers it deems necessary to carry out its mission.

(5) The members of the commission shall receive no compensation for their services, but shall be reimbursed for any usual and customary expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

(e) An executive director shall be selected by the commission and may hire staff. The executive director shall be qualified by his or her experience working on issues relating to persons with disabilities, organizing research and reports, advocacy and communication skills and demonstrated leadership abilities. The executive director shall not simultaneously serve as a member of the commission.

(f) The commission shall work to advance the cause of all persons with disabilities in the commonwealth. The commission shall be empowered to (i) study, review, advise and report on: (A) any disparities across service or geographical areas concerning the range of available options within state disability services; (B) the status of transportation for persons with disabilities including access to employment opportunities; (C) the effect of public assistance for persons with disabilities as it pertains to earning limits and eligibility for subsidies for food, housing, child care and other benefits; (D) establishing school-to-work activities for transition aged youth with disabilities that establish a bridge to self-sufficiency and engage school supports, family members and employers; (E) the status of the strategic plan to make the commonwealth a model employer by seeking to increase the number of people with disabilities employed by the executive branch; (F) the enhanced enforcement of state requirements that promote diversity in state government employment; and (G) the number of persons with disabilities who apply for state disability services and are unsuccessful in receiving services; (ii) facilitate and promote public awareness to encourage inclusion of persons with disabilities as employees and vendors within the private and public sector workforce, including under-represented business sectors of all sizes; (iii) assess programs and practices in all state agencies as they affect persons with disabilities, as the commission deems necessary and appropriate; (iv) advise executive and legislative bodies regarding the impact of proposed legislation on persons with disabilities; and (v) promote and facilitate collaboration among local disability commissions, disability rights advocacy organizations and disability employment service providers.

(g) The commission shall annually, not later than October 31, report the results of its findings and activities of the preceding fiscal year and its recommendations, which may include draft legislation, to the governor, the house and senate committees on ways and means, the clerks of the house of representatives and the senate, the joint committee on children, families and persons with disabilities and the joint committee on labor and workforce development.

(h) The powers of the commission shall include, but not be limited to: (i) using voluntary and uncompensated services of private individuals, agencies and organizations as may from time to time be offered and needed; (ii) reviewing policies and legislation and make recommendations to agencies and officers of the state and local subdivisions of government to effectuate the purposes of subsections (f) and (g); (iii) selecting an executive director and to acquire adequate staff to perform its duties; (iv) establishing and maintain such offices as it may deem necessary; (v) enacting by-laws for its own governance; (vi) establishing subcommittees or regional chapters of the commission as it deems necessary; and (vii) holding regular, public meetings and fact-finding hearings and other public forums as it may deem necessary.

(i) Public meetings should be held in a manner accessible to and welcoming of persons of all abilities with necessary accommodations to ensure broad participation. Notices of meetings and other information shall be posted to a publicly accessible website that also accommodates persons who are visually impaired.

(j) The commission may request from all state agencies such information and assistance as the commission may require.

(k) The commission may accept and solicit funds, including any gifts, donations, grants or bequests or any federal funds, for any of the purposes of this section. Such funds shall be deposited in a separate account with the state treasurer, be received by the state treasurer on behalf of the commonwealth and be expended by the commission in accordance with commission by-laws and state and federal law.