

# Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

## Disability Employment Subcommittee

### Meeting Minutes

Date of meeting: Monday, January 29, 2024

Start time: 12:00pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members Participating Remotely	
1	Kathy Petkauskos (Chair) – Director, Work Without Limits at UMass Chan Medical School
2	Chris White – CEO & President, Road to Responsibility, Inc.
3	Gyasi Burks-Abbott – Self Advocate Faculty, LEND Program, Boston Children's Hospital
4	Oz Mondejar – President, Mucho Gusto Consulting
Members Not Present	
5	Carl Richardson – ADA Coordinator, Massachusetts State House
6	Representative Mathew Muratore – Massachusetts House of Representatives

Action Items		Person Responsible
1	Follow up with Joe Reale on simplified fact sheets for employers and businesses and data on high demand employment areas that MRC/Accenture are targeting initially	Imene
2	Share Work Without Limits' many <a href="#">benefits and work-related fact sheets</a> with the subcommittee.	Kathy Petkauskos
3	<p>FY 24 Goal: <i>Come with an idea and/or contact to identify and facilitate at least one opportunity (e.g., event, speaking engagement, information dissemination) to engage and educate at least 100 small and medium businesses/employers on the value of including people with disabilities in the workplace, available community resources, and recognition of effective employer practices.</i></p> <p>Create a target list, identify who has contact and make a plan to reach out to these contacts.</p>	ALL

### Welcome, Roll Calls, and Introductions

1. Welcome, Roll Call, and Introductions
2. Inspirational Quote provided by Imene Bouziane Saidi: “I wish for a world that views disability, mental or physical, not as a hindrance but as unique attributes that can be seen as powerful assets if given the right opportunities.” By Oliver Sacks
3. Cliff Effect, presentation by Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission (MRC) Director of Analytics and Quality Assurance William Noone, Financial Wellness Director Joe Reale and Accenture Health and Public Service Manager Dea Biancarelli, MSc.
  - Background from Joe Reale:
    - The Cliff Effect is an issue MRC has been working on for a while.
    - MRC has worked with Accenture in the past to identify interventions and participate in demonstration projects.
  - Questions/Answers:
    - Is there a cheat sheet/ fact sheet that can be shared with the human resources side of businesses so they can better accommodate their employees with disabilities?
      - That’s a good idea in terms of the partnership aspect. MRC’s NextGen program has resources available.
      - In terms of the SSI and SSDI programs, MRC has been using Social Security Administration (SSA) documents or the business community at large. It is all online on [www.ssa.gov](http://www.ssa.gov)
        - ➔ Commissioner Oz followed up with a request of a more accessible, simplified version of the sheets that are currently available for employers and businesses.
        - ➔ Joe Reale will follow up and send more resources.
    - What are the high demand employment areas that you are targeting initially?
      - MRC has data on the sectors that can be shared with the subcommittee.
      - Right now, only 20% of individuals MRC serves are in high-paying jobs. That is the change that has to happen, but this cliff effect continues to be a barrier.

- MRC is trying to influence these policies and influence their counselors and staff to think differently around the work and high paying sectors.
- Gyasi shared his lived experience working with MRC in the past. He shared that MRC wasn't equipped to get him a job as a person with a Graduate degree and looking for something for more substantial.
- Subcommittee member asked, MRC/Accenture are launching in February; can you speak more of its implementation?
  - MRC is planning for this in February but not quite there yet.
  - This will require SSI policy change; this won't happen tomorrow. MRC has a lot of research and wants to have their facts in line.
  - Number of bills at Congress, there is a particular interest, opportune time. Policy change must happen for real cliff change.
- Kathy shared that MRC has the Commission's support as well Work Without Limits. She also shared other stakeholders such as the [National Association of Benefits and Work Incentive Specialist \(NABWIS\)](#).
  - Work Without Limits has a lot of [facts sheets on benefits and work](#), but not one focusing on employers.
- Oz shared that testimonials are important too as a marketing strategy: employer and employee testimony:
  - "I was able to keep my job and pick up hours because...", "I was able to get that promotion because..."
  - Work Without Limits has [success stories](#), some of which are a result of benefits counseling services.
- Is there an interest with SSA regarding a policy change for high paying jobs?
  - Yes. This administration wants us to continue talking with our state and federal legislators.
  - SSA has the mechanism to have a pilot project to regulate change.
- How can this commission be helpful?
  - Forming partnerships in a coalition.
  - Getting input from that coalition.

- Key contacts: utilize and have your influences involved.
  - Would love to come back as a continued conversation.
  - Gyasi shared that the Federal SSI Savings Penalty Elimination Act has been resubmitted to the House and Senate, [House Bill 5408](#) and [Senate Bill 2767](#).
- 4. Review Minutes and Action Items from November 2023 Meeting
  - ***By September or October, the subcommittee will identify and facilitate at least one opportunity (e.g., event, speaking engagement, information dissemination) to engage and educate at least 100 small and medium businesses/employers on the value of including people with disabilities in the workplace, available community resources, and recognition of effective employer practices.***
  - Members ideas:
    - Blog, presentation, featured speaker and target business associations, restaurant associations, retail associations:
      - Create a target list, identify who has contacts and make a plan to reach out to these contacts.
    - Organizations that have a brochure or newsletter
    - Create content for speaking at an event – this subcommittee will develop something and identify which member will be presenting at the event.
    - Oz: how can we leverage celebratory months/ milestones that will trigger an outreach?:
      - July is the anniversary of the signing of the ADA
      - October is National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM)
      - April is Autism awareness month
      - March is intellectual and developmental disabilities awareness month
    - Rachel will be added to this subcommittee and offered to help with fact sheets, newsletter.
    - Chris has had preliminary conversations with three chambers of commerce who expressed willingness to get information out such as the commission speaking at one of the chambers of commerce's event. Chris to follow up with them.
    - Oz shared that having a consistent messaging is important.
  - Gyasi will provide a quote for the next meeting.
  - No guest speaker in February – focus will be on content.

## 5. Announcements

- Work Without Limits virtual career fair February 28 1:30-3:30, 30 employers registered.
- [Autism Connections](#) is having a conference on April 10 and there will be a panel on employment. There might be employers in the audience.

6. Next Meeting Dates:

- Monday, February 26, 2024 from 12:00-1:00 PM
- Monday, April 22, 2024 from 12:00-1:00 PM
- Monday, May 20, 2024 from 12:00-1:00 PM
- Monday, August 26, 2024 from 12:00-1:00 PM
- Monday, November 18, 2024 from 12:00-1:00 PM

7. Adjournment