**Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities**
**Disability Employment Subcommittee**
**Meeting Minutes**

Date of meeting: Monday, August 31, 2026
Start time: 12:00pm
Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

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| **Members Participating Remotely** | |
| 1 | Rachel Stanton – Clean Water Trust at the Treasurer's Office |
| 2 | Oz Mondejar – Mucho Gusto Consulting |
| 3 | Kathy Petkauskos – UMass Chan Medical School |
| 4 | Chris White – Road to Responsibility, Inc |
| 5 | Victoria Gill – DPPC |
| **Members Not Present** | |
| 5 | Lexi Semanchik – Treasurer's Office |
| 6 | Carl Richardson – Massachusetts State House |
| 7 | Gyasi Burks-Abbott – LEND Fellowship, Boston Children's Hospital (Chair) |
| 8 | Senator Vanna Howard – Massachusetts Senate |
| 9 | The Hon. Chair Denise Garlick |
| 10 | Rachel Kaprielian – Triangle, Inc. |
| **Advisory Council Members Present** | |
| 8 | Cambria Russell – Federation for Children with Special Needs |
| 9 | Kristin Britton – Department of Transitional Assistance |

| **Action Items** | | **Person Responsible** |
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| 1 | Discuss the State Exchange on Employment and Disability (SEED) Crosswalk Policy Brief and Benefit Cliff document | All Members |

## Agenda

1. Welcome, Roll Call, and Meeting Minutes Approval
    - Tabled until the next meeting due to lack of quorum.

2. Inspirational Quote by John Lewis, provided by Commissioner Gyasi Burks-Abbott

    *"When I care about something, when I commit to it, I am prepared to take the long, hard road, knowing it may not happen today or tomorrow, but ultimately, eventually, it will happen. That's what faith is all about. That's the definition of commitment--patience and persistence. People who are like fireworks, popping off right and left with lots of sound and sizzle, can capture a crowd, capture a lot of attention for a time, but I always have to*

*ask, where will they be at the end? Some battles are long and hard, and you have to have staying power. Firecrackers go off in a flash, then leave nothing but ashes. I prefer a pilot light--the flame is nothing flashy, but once it is lit, it doesn't go out. It burns steadily, and it burns forever."*

3. Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council Presentation by Steve LaMaster SRC Council Member and Vinfen
    - Steve LaMaster, SRC Council Member and Chair of the Business and Employment Opportunity Committee, provided an overview of the Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council (SRC) and its role in the vocational rehabilitation system. The SRC is a federally mandated advisory council that helps ensure the disability community has a significant role in how the vocational rehabilitation program operates.
    - The SRC advises the Commissioner and MassAbility on matters related to the delivery of vocational rehabilitation services and works in partnership with MassAbility to develop annual recommendations.
    - The presentation reviewed the SRC's four subcommittees: State; Business and Employment Opportunity; Membership; and Participant Satisfaction.
    - The FY27 recommendations from the Business and Employment Opportunity Committee include strengthening employer engagement with the SRC, partnering with MassAbility on the implementation of self-employment supports, and continuing to promote the Disability Employment Tax Credit (DETC) to participants, vendors, and employers.
        - MassAbility DETC Guidance
        - DETC Employer Handout
    - The Membership Committee's FY27 recommendation focuses on increasing awareness of the SRC through efforts such as social media, developing an elevator pitch, and ensuring brand alignment with MassAbility.
    - The presentation also highlighted current SRC membership openings, including four Business, Industry & Labor seats and a State Workforce Development seat.
    - Discussion:
        - Several members indicated that they were not familiar with the SRC and asked how long it has been in place.
        - It was explained that State Rehabilitation Councils are federally required as part of the vocational rehabilitation system and have a long history under the Rehabilitation Act. The SRC's current federal requirements are set out in 29 U.S.C. § 725 and 34 CFR § 361.16
        - The discussion also noted that the role of SRCs was reaffirmed through the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) of 2014.

4. NDEAM Update
    - The Commission's 2026 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) Celebration, which will be held on October 7, 2026, at the Massachusetts State House. The main celebration will take place from 11am to 1pm in the Great Hall of Flags.

- The celebration will recognize legislative leaders, an employment support professional, and employers advancing disability inclusion in the workplace. The Commission will recognize two small-to-mid-size organizations and one large organization, with the employer selection process underway.
- An afternoon panel, "Artificial Intelligence, Disability, and the Future of Work," will be held from 2 to 3:30pm. The discussion will bring together perspectives on technology and accessibility, disability and family experiences, workplace culture and leadership, and AI governance.
- Commissioners Rachel Stanton and Carl Richardson will co-moderate the panel. Discussion topics will include opportunities and potential barriers created by AI, accessibility of AI tools, bias in hiring and recruitment, workplace culture, privacy and data, and the importance of involving people with disabilities in decisions about how AI is developed and used.
- Register here: NDEAM 2026

5. Adjournment

**Upcoming Meeting Dates**

- November 16, 2026

**Meeting Materials:**

- May 2026 Meeting Minutes
- SRC Presentation