**Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council Meeting**

**December 11, 2024, via Zoom**

**Council Meeting Minutes**

**Present:** Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Raquel Quezada, Barbara L’Italien, Ann Lynch, Sandra Heller, Elaine Gabovitch, Chelsey Goddard, William Edes, Sarah Kelleher, Paul Lufty, Katherine Beibel, Chantal Johnson, Asha Abdullahi, Cynthia Laine, Cody Rooney, Mary Mahon McCauley, Asha Abdullahi, Timothy Cahill, Austin Carr, Amber Pettell, Cindy Thomas, Tatiana Thomas, Bridget Levandowski, Annette Peele, Emily Lauer

**Excused:** Dusya Lyubouskaya, Sara Scrivener, Alana Russo

**Absent:** Andrew Carr, Priscilla Bessa, Courtney Waters, Marissa O’Donnell, Carlyon Kain, Diane Lescinskas

**Guests:** Brian Kremer, Carol Friesner & Guests

**Staff:** Craig Hall, Lee Larriu, Andre Williams, Patricia Jackson, Jennifer Bertrand, Jackson Crilley, Mary Davis, Liz Fancher, Adelia DelTrecco, Kaitlin Stober

Raquel Quezada, Chairperson, convened the meeting at 6:02 pm, welcoming everyone.

**1. Acceptance of the Agenda:** Motion to accept passed unanimously**.**

First: Sandra Heller Second: Cody Rooney

Voting Poll Results: Passed

**2. Approval of September Meeting Minutes: Motion** to approve passed unanimously**.**

First: Sandra Heller Second: Cody Rooney

Voting Poll Results: Passed

3. **Updates from the Chairperson, Raquel Quezada, Chairperson**

Raquel welcomed our new Council Members: Austin Carr, Tatiana Thomas and Amber Pattell and our new Developmental Disabilities Service (DDS) representative Tim Cahill. She also welcomed our guests: Brian Kremer, Carol Friesner and their guests from Mass Advocates Standing Strong, our grantee, who will be presenting tonight.

Raquel recognized Dusya Lyubovskaya, who has been a Council member for well over 6 years. Dusya’s term has expired, and her replacement was finally appointed. Dusya could not be here tonight, but we want to thank her for her years of exceptional dedication to our Council and we have mailed her certificate of appreciation and her award. In addition, our MOD representative, Mary Mahon McCauley, if retiring in February, 2025. Mary, thank you for all you have done for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. We wish you all the best and happy retirement!

Raquel shared our upcoming events in collaboration with MDDC as follows:

Thursday, March 6th - Legislative Reception

Wednesday, March 12th MDDC Council Meeting

Wednesday, June 11th MDDC Council Meeting

Wednesday, September 10th MDDC Council Meeting

Wednesday, December 10th MDDC Council Meeting

**4. Committee Reports:**

**Executive Committee – Raquel Quezada, Chairperson**.

Raquel deferred the report to Craig Hall. FY 25 Budget Update – Craig provided an analysis and monitoring of Continuing Resolution that expires December 20th. Craig noted that two key pieces of legislation — the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act, which funds the bulk of the nation’s work training programs, and the Older Americans Act, which funds a range of services for seniors — could ride on the continuing resolution. Both have sign off from the top four committee leaders. Staff alignment and backfilling are ongoing. He also gave an update that the Council is backfilling some positions and almost filled one.

Craig stated that US ACL will have DDCs report the Annual Program Performance Report using a fillable pdf form instead of the online platform and staff are working to complete the collection, analysis and writing of the report. Craig also added that he is constructing a new report comparing State Plan performance against annual Program Performance is being developed. The purpose is to primarily share with staff to understand how well we are performing (using federal Performance Measures). The report will also be helpful when beginning to plan the next five-year State Plan.

Craig updated the Executive Committee that there were more funds remaining from the public health funds than projected and talked about using those funds for exhibiting on the public health needs and disparities. Sandy and Craig agreed that Craig should talk to Cynthia Laine, DEI Committee chair, Raquel and Cody on identifying community projects to fund.

**Membership** –**Cody Rooney, Vice Chairperson-Committee Chairperson; Adelia DelTrecco, Staff**

Cody stated that we have 3 new members that were appointed, and 1 reappointment and we are still waiting for two other reappointments and another new member to be appointed. We are continuing to keep in contact with the Governor’s appointments office. In January the Membership Committee will be looking at our next round of vacancies/reappointments, which are vacancies/reappointments that happened this past October. Per our By-Laws, our current members serve till they are replaced. We will continue to keep everyone posted.

**Public Policy Committee – Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Committee Chairperson, Jennifer Bertrand, Staff**

Kaitlin Stober and Gyasi Burks-Abbott reported that the MDDC policy committee has been meeting monthly, and we are currently scheduling this recurring meeting for 2025; MDDC is hosting our Bill Sharing Session so people can come together and learn about state legislation being filed that can impact people with DD and their families. This is happening on Thursday, February 13th. Our MDDC Legislative Priorities Survey is LIVE and will close at the end of January. Please share widely with your networks. Kaitlin also stated that they have a version in English and Spanish. Our Annual Legislative Reception is on Thursday March 6th between 10:30 and 11:30 AM in the Great Hall of the Massachusetts State House.

**Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee – Cynthia Liane, Committee Chairperson; Andre Williams, Staff -** Cynthia gave an update on Voting and Employment Awareness. She stated that Sandy, Raquel, and Gyasi were also present to promote awareness about voting rights and employment opportunities. We discussed actionable ways to engage and educate our community on these critical issues. The Flutie 5K Run for Autism Awareness - Myself, Raquel, and Asha participated in the Flutie 5K Run to support autism awareness. The event was a success in fostering greater understanding and inclusion for individuals with autism. Cynthia stated that the DEI Committee needs to adjust their meeting dates to better accommodate everyone's schedules. A survey will soon be sent out to determine the most convenient times for all participants.

**6. Grants Update/Presentation – Mass Advocates Standing Strong, Brian Kremer & Carol Friesner: Liz Fancher, Staff**

**MASS** – Brian Kremer, Carol Friesner and several self-advocates gave an update on their project and its progress. The project goal is to strengthen leadership and advocacy skills for self-advocates and to promote self-determination while targeting populations of self-advocates who have been underserved.

**Grants Update/Liz Fancher** – Liz stated that for federal fiscal year 2024 which ended on September 30, two of the three MDDC State Plan goals were achieved in large part by grant activities.  For Goal 1, Advocacy and Leadership, 303 people with developmental disabilities and 38 family members participated in grantee training and other activities designed to increase their knowledge on taking part in decisions that affect their lives and the lives of others.  Under Goal 3, Information, Awareness and Education, approximately 36 people with DD and 308 family members participated in grant projects.  Across both goals, close to 100% stated they were satisfied with their participation.

**7. Training Team Update – Lee Larriu and Staff**

Lee and staff reported that during the months of October and November, the team held two Employment Series where a total of 15 students with ID/DD graduated. The new partnering school districts are Prospect Hill Academy Charter School in Cambridge. Other students joined from the Arc of Greater Plymouth, Viability, and Lawrence Public Schools. The training team attended the transition fair at Agawam High School in Western Massachusetts on November 13th. There were 25 tables that had resources to help students in transition, gearing them for life outside of high school. Connections were made with agencies and with family members sharing both training and council opportunities.

The training team, along with Jackson Crilley, Council Members; Sandra Heller, Vice-Chairperson, Cody Rooney, and Chairperson, Raquel Quezada, attended the MASS Conference at the Best Western Royal Plaza in Marlborough. A big congratulations goes out to Sara Young of MASS Advocates Standing Strong for winning the Sandy Houghton Self-Advocate of the Year Award sponsored by both MASS and the DD Council. At the event, the training team also hosted a workshop entitled Leading My Life begins with ME! In this workshop, participants discussed what it means to be a leader in their own lives. The team broke down what leadership is about interactive training, participated in the Am I or Am I Not exercise and got creative in a collage on how they see themselves as leaders in the community. The MDDC training team is working on videos to be posted on our website introducing who we are and thoughts about the work we do and the importance of advocacy.

**The MDDC Training Team Calendar:**  The Positive Me: Self-Esteem Series will run in January for the following dates.14, 16, 21, 23, 28 and 30. To learn more about trainings such as Self-Esteem the Positive ME! and Legislative Advocacy and Supported Decision Making, please contact Lee Larriu at Lee.Larriu@mass.gov

**8. Other Business –** No other business

**9. Council Meeting Survey -** Raquel stated that a link to our Council Meeting Survey has been sent to your email, we ask that you please take 3 mins and complete the survey for us.

**10. Adjournment**

Motion to adjourn was approved unanimously.

First: Cody Rooney Second: Sandra Heller

Voting Poll Results: Passed

The meeting was adjourned at 7:19pm.

Alana J Russo 1 24 2024

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Review/ Approved

Alana Russo, Secretary Date:

Craig Hall /s/

Review/Approved

Craig Hall, Executive Director Date: January 23, 2025