**Governor’s Commission on Intellectual Disability**

**Thursday, April 23, 2020 (Remote)**

The Governor’s Commission on Intellectual Disability met remotely on April 23, 2020. Those attending were Members: James Brett (Chair), Amy Carnevale, Marjorie Cohen, Aaron Stone, Anne Fracht, Joanne Jaxtimer, George Ford, Doreen Cummings, James Cassetta, JoAnn Simons, DDS: Jane Ryder, Elizabeth Morse, Christopher Thompson, Christopher Thompson, Nick Dantzer and Victor Hernandez.

Chairman Brett opened the meeting at 5:55pm.

Commissioner Ryder opened the discussion by reviewing the onset of COVID-19 and the DDS response. Every day the Department encountered new realities and uncertainties. The Department’s business as usual was suspended, but we continued to focus on the individuals we support. We are taking care of the residents in our group homes and facilities, reaching out to the individuals and families living throughout our communities, and keeping our operations going. DDS continues to make sure the supports we provide to individuals and families across the Commonwealth continues.

Christopher Thompson reported on the Updated Residential Program Guidance recently released. The Guidance follows the Congregate Care Guidance, updated by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EHS), for all residential and congregate care programs. It focuses on important protective measures and also mitigating the risk of spreading COVID-19. This involves the restrictions on visitors, the screening of staff and other precautions to keep residents & staff healthy. DDS also partnered with Fallon Ambulance to begin offering mobile testing of symptomatic individuals and staff in residential programs. The intent of this mobile testing program is to have all individuals and staff tested. However, homes with individuals displaying symptoms or a positive case of COVID-19 in a resident or staff already confirmed will be prioritized.

Elizabeth Morse reported that DDS the funded Family Support programs continues to provide assistance and support to families through this crisis. DDS is working to make the services as flexible as possible to meet the needs of the individuals and families during this time.

Nick Dantzer reported on the Department’s acquisition of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). DDS is working in collaboration with DPH and the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency (MEMA) to procure and provide access to PPE and cleaning supplies. DDS understands that due to the rapidly expanding needs for PPEs – including masks, gowns, gloves, and eye protection. PPE resources are limited in the Commonwealth and careful use of PPE is necessary. Our efforts are to ensure that DDS programs have an adequate supply to meet our needs. For our providers they should make every available effort, in partnership with their respective organizations and associations, to obtain PPE through their usual suppliers. If a provider-operated congregate care program experiences emergency shortage of PPE, they should contact their regional MEMA office to request emergency supplies.

Commissioner Ryder reported that to best protect individuals served by DDS we are opening COVID-19 recovery and isolation centers at our DDS facilities located at Wrentham, Hogan, and Templeton. These sites will be made available to DDS individuals who test positive for COVID-19 and are unable to safely quarantine at home. Many of our providers are also developing emergency alternative residential sites and will work with the families if this is the recommendation.

Chairman Brett shared he has heard from many constituencies regarding the current DDS visitation policy. Many members joined in dissent of the current policy and asked the Department to reconsider to allow family members to visit their loved ones. Anne Fracht highlighted the efforts of NY state self-advocates who successfully had their visitation policy overturned.

Commissioner Ryder joined in the pain of not visiting their loved ones. She assured the members that as we deal with this unprecedented crisis, we are working to support all the individuals and families in the DDS community. In this public health crisis, as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Department of Public Health updates their guidance, we will adjust our guidance to meet or exceed their standards.

Chairman Brett adjourned the meeting at 7:10pm.