**Governor’s Commission on Intellectual Disability**

**June 17, 2020 (Remote)**

The Governor’s Commission on Intellectual Disability met remotely on June 17, 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, Liz Sandblom, Nick Dantzer and Victor Hernandez.

Chairman Brett opened the meeting at 4:30pm.

April 2020 meeting minutes were approved.

Liz Sandblom, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Operations was introduced to the Commission. Liz brings over 25 years of varied work experience at DDS, including a Service Coordinator, a Service Coordinator Supervisor, Assistant Area Director and then Deputy Area Director at Greater Boston. Since February of 2016 Liz has served as Area Director of the Greater Boston Area Office and provided exceptional leadership in a challenging area.

Commissioner Ryder commented on the incredible outpouring of emotion to the killing of George Floyd in Minneapolis. We have watched demonstrations and are dealing with our own feelings in response. Twenty-nine years ago, in response to the beating of Rodney King and the demonstrations that followed throughout the country, staff throughout DDS got together to talk. They talked about racism, inequities, inequalities, and biases within our workplace and in our lives. Out of those discussions, DDS staff resolved to do something. They determined that it was important as an agency to make an effort to recruit young people of color in urban areas of our state for summer employment opportunities in human services. That desire to do something resulted in the Urban Youth Collaborative Program (UYCP). We have recruited thousands of young people to work in DDS programs across the state. As a result of this program, DDS has become a more diverse agency and a stronger agency. Once again, it is so important for us to talk about what is going on our country, to talk about how we are feeling, to talk about change, and to make change. Unfortunately, COVID-19 eliminated our ability to have many these important discussions in our workplace and face to face, but we are committed to finding ways to have those discussions, to exchange ideas, and to hear from our staff. DDS is dedicated to support our staff and the people we support to making things better.

DDS staff reported on the multi-phased process of reopening, DDS is working with the COVID-19 Command Center and Massachusetts Department of Public Health (DPH) to determine how to reopen DDS. DDS first and foremost is dedicated to health and safety as our system continues to respond to the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19). DDS and the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers (ADDP) have created a Coordinating Council to develop a phased Reopening Plan, which will apply to our day and employment services. The Coordinating Council’s will establish infectious disease control standards and protocols to keep individuals, staff, and families safe. While exploring alternative service delivery models that meet our ongoing response to COVID-19, we will need to creating a billing and contracting process to allow for flexibility in how our providers deliver services and create options for the individuals. There will need to be close collaboration with our transportation services in the safest way possible with COVID as reopening schedules evolve. Most importantly creating an effective communication strategy to keep providers, individuals, and families updated on policies, timelines, and protocols while also providing a forum for any questions and concerns. We have begun to survey individuals and families on their needs to safely return to programming as well as assess their own ability to implement social distancing. It should be noted that our re-opening efforts and timelines may look different in each program, given their ability to meet those needs and comply with the DPH & CDC standards and guidelines.

With the efforts of our residential staff, families, and the individuals we support, we continue to see a decline in new positive COVID-19 cases and across the state. Very soon DDS expects to update, and our Visitation Guidance and we ask for a little more time and patience as we finalize this. We have heard the concerns from families, stakeholders and advocates Aand we value the feedback as we continue to meet the challenges of the COVID-19 virus together.

Chairman Brett adjourned the meeting at 5:55pm.