**Governor’s Commission on Intellectual Disability**

**May 25, 2022 (Remote)**

The Governor’s Commission on Intellectual Disability met remotely on May 25, 2022. Those attending were members: James Brett (Chair), Amy Carnevale, Marjorie Cohen, Joanne Jaxtimer, George Ford, Doreen Cummings (Phone), Becca Gould, DDS: Commissioner Jane Ryder, Elizabeth Morse, Christopher Klaskin, Tim Cahill, Liz Sandblom, Nick Dantzer, Kim Egan and Victor Hernandez.

Chairman Brett opened the meeting at 4:05pm.

The Dec 14, 2021, minutes were approved.

Commissioner Ryder updated the members on the continued struggle with the overall staffing shortage with our all of our programs and our work with our provider agencies to to work on different type of solutions. It is inhibiting us to get back to services of where we were a few years ago. Currently our biggest challenge is with our Turning 22 class. We are seeing each year the turning 22 class becoming more and more challenging e.g. autism youth with mental health issues and with the staffing shortage providers are having a difficult time meeting the needs of these folks. Getting them into the proper day services and making sure that their residential placements are appropriate has been a challenge due to the staffing issues. On another matter, the Secretary has a monthly meeting with all EHS Commissioners and at our last meeting the Governor joined us. He wanted to hear the different challenges that we were facing, and the work being done to address these. The governor will continue to work on his agenda and is dedicated to accomplishing as mush as possible until his last day in office. He also shared that he has daily phone calls with other governors around the country and MA is so far ahead of so many other states. The Secretary is also committed to staying through the end of the administration.

Kim Egan, DDS CFO, provided a current budget update. For Fiscal Year 2023, DDS was appropriated almost $2.3 billion dollars in all of our accounts. That includes increases of $34 million in residential services, $7.4M In our day work account, $5.7M in our family support account and $4M in our Turning 22 account.

Chris Thompson, DDS Chief of Staff, provided an update on workforce efforts and COVID. With ARPA related funding DDS has contracted with a consultant to develop a campaign to help with recruitment efforts for our workforce efforts. Since the middle of April, there was a surge of COVID cases but the incidences of severe health outcomes of the people we serve was very small. We're seeing very few hospitalizations and no deaths through this. Recent CDC guidance recommends that if you do test positive that you isolate for a period of time, which leads to challenges on the workforce side, DDS is tracking this and we continue to have policies in place to protect the individuals that we serve. There is an update to the guidance on transportation to and from our programs, which before was very strict in terms of not allowing individuals who couldn't wear a mask to travel with other individuals. Now that language has changed so that if you can't wear a mask or you're not up to date on your vaccinations, that recommendation is that you socially distanced to the extent possible.

Tim Cahill, Asst. Commissioner reviewed respite efforts through the ARPA funding. DDS is working with our regional teams and our area offices to take advantage of this funding and try to create some additional respite capacity. 1) DDS is working to offer more in the way of school, vacation and camp programs, both during the vacation periods and during the school year; 2) DDS is developing onsite respite on weekends so that family caregivers will have the opportunity to have their loved one spend some meaningful time at a respite location and participate in some meaningful activities and also just provide a break for the family caregiver at some point over the weekend; 3) DDS is planning on investing some of these respite dollars is in our family support flexible funding stipends to increase the amount of money they receive and increase the number of individuals who overall are receiving it and 4) to add additional capacity for both respite facilities and medical respite over the next two years. DDS intends to open five new respite programs around the state with two of these to be medical respite programs.

Liz Sandblom, Deputy Asst. Commissioner, discussed the enabling technology initiative. With the expansion of the ARPA funding, DDS will increase individual assistive technology evaluations with the individual. Through these interactions they work with the individual to identify their goals to be more independent in their lives and what technology can DDS provide for them. The increased funding will support the evaluation and the purchase of technology. DDS is also providing startup funding for our provider agencies who are interested in offering remote supports and monitoring. This is a separate service in which there is a virtual staff person on the other end of a computer screen that's available for up to 24 hours a day to help support somebody to be independent in their daily activities, whether they live at home with family, or whether they live in their own apartment. DDS was able through our standardized rates and traditional contracting, to provide some bonuses and pay increases to our direct care workers in our traditional services. We advocated for two rounds of bonuses that would go towards our self-direction support staff. This is to acknowledge the hard work that they have been providing and the connections for those individuals and those programs.

Jim Brett adjourned the meeting at 5:03pm