**Governor’s Commission on Intellectual Disability**

**November 22, 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, Jim Cassetta, George Ford, Anne Fracht, Jo Ann Simons. DDS: Elizabeth Morse, Christopher Klaskin, Tim Cahill, Nick Dantzer, Chris Thompson and Victor Hernandez.

Chairman Brett opened the meeting at 3:02pm.

The May 25, 2022, minutes were approved.

Elizabeth Morse reported that the staffing crisis coupled with COVID is like nothing DDS has experienced before. This has created a ripple effect across the entire system. Our providers can't hire and fill vacancies. Our providers are doing everything they can and we're struggling to bring back the most intensive individuals back into programs. We have new strategies that we're using on the provider side and the state ops side. This includes ARPA funds, workforce grants and campaigns to recruit/retain staff. Across the system, we've been tracking about 80% occupancy for day programs. But that fluctuates weekly and staffing for that continues to be a challenge.

Chris Thompson continued the discussion regarding staffing. On background, Commissioner Ryder attended the annual direct support professional conference. It was in Falmouth and almost 200 direct support professionals attended. There was a lot of enthusiasm during the day. Looking at funding over the past two years, when it comes to supporting the provider community through targeted funding, the DDS system received $430 million and then over the past same two year period an additional $350 million in permanent rate increases was made to this system, bringing the total to $780 million. The provider workforce grant program funded through ARPA is to build career ladders, pipeline programs, and partnerships with education that helps build and sustain the workforce. The call to care campaign is an effort representing the human service field as a desirable career.

Nick Dantzer reported that the fiscal year 2023 budget for the 12 DDS accounts shows a 7% increase of $149 million. The biggest growth area is the community day and work programs. DDS is also developing the fiscal year 2024 budget.

Tim Cahill reported on the ARPA funding for enabling technology, bonuses to self-direction providers and respite initiatives. Over 300 individuals have been referred to Assistive Technology (AT) providers to be assessed for AT devices/solutions to help them achieve greater independence. Over 100 individuals have received AT devices. Communication, healthcare/medication management and safety are the three main areas that the 300 are seeking AT assistance for. $1,000 bonuses have been sent out to 1,171 direct support workers for a total of $1.17M paid out. This is to help with provider retention and acknowledges the challenges they faced during the pandemic. Respite programs included weekend enrichment opportunities for a small group of individuals to take advantage of cultural and meaningful leisure activities and to provide a break for caregivers. School vacation programs will offer more summer and other school vacation/camp programs. A weekend drop-in respite program for a Saturday or Sunday at a respite location will also offer a break to caregivers. 9 new respite programs will open in FY23 & 24 including at least one maybe a second medical respite program.

Jo Ann Simons raised the challenges residential providers are facing regarding the EOHHS Siting Policy. It takes 2-3 days to see if there is another EOHHS agency home in close proximity to the desired site. In this market, prospective buyers are making an offer the same day as the open house. This puts the providers it a difficult position during this competitive bid market. Elizabeth Morse responded that we have heard this from other providers and we are in discussion with EOHHS on this issue.

Jim Brett adjourned the meeting at 4:20pm