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Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Bureau of Health Professions Licensure
Board of Registration of Hearing Instrument Specialists
250 Washington Street
Boston, MA 02108

Public Meeting Minutes

April 19, 2024

A public meeting of the Massachusetts Board of Registration of Hearing Instrument Specialists (the Board) was held remotely with video and audio conference as an alternate means of public access pursuant to Chapter 107 of the Acts of 2022, An Act Relative to Extending Certain State of Emergency Accommodations, signed into law on July 16, 2022.

Executive Director Lisa Guglietta noted a quorum of members present via video or phone and called the meeting to order at 9:04 a.m.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Dana Mario
Rony Soto
Elizabeth Adebayo
Heather Hanley
Paul Beckner

STAFF PRESENT

Lisa Guglietta, Board Executive Director
Sheila York, Esq., Board Counsel

STAFF ABSENT

Katie Goldrick, Board Associate Executive Director

ATTENDANCE:

Rony Soto, Chair, took attendance by roll call and a quorum of board members was recorded with the following members present via video conference: *Hanley, Mario, Soto, Adebayo, Beckner*

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Rony Soto called for a motion to approve the April 19, 2024 meeting agenda. Thereafter a motion was made by Heather Hanley, seconded by Elizabeth Adebayo and VOTED (roll call); **to approve the April 19, 2024 agenda as drafted.**

in-favor: Mario, Soto, Hanley, Adebayo, Beckner

opposed: none

CONFLICT OF INTEREST AND OPEN MEETING LAW REQUIREMENTS:

Sheila York, Board Counsel, reviewed Conflict of Interest and Open Meeting Law Requirements with the Board. Members should contact Attorney York with questions about possible conflicts with applicants, petitioners, or cases before the Board. If possible, members should bring these matters to Board Counsel's attention before the meeting.

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

The Board discussed the draft public meeting minutes of 1/19/24. Thereafter a motion was made by Heather Hanley, seconded by Dana Mario and VOTED (roll call); **to approve the public meeting minutes of January 19, 2024 as drafted.**

in-favor: Soto, Mario, Adebayo, Hanley, Beckner

opposed: none

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR REPORT

Ms. Guglietta welcomed the new Board member Paul Beckner. She noted that there is an open seat on the Board for a Public Member. Ms. Guglietta informed Board members that state email accounts are disabled after 90 days if there is no log in activity. She reminded members to log into their state email accounts at least once a month and when they change their passwords to set a reminder for the next password change for 75 days out.

APPRENTICESHIP EXTENSION REQUESTS

Jessica Niedzwiecki, License HEA225 requested an extension of her apprenticeship to be able to work and take the International Hearing Society (IHS) exam. She was first licensed as an apprentice in 2014 and had taken time off from work due to raising children and subsequent medical issues. The Board approved an 18-month extension of her apprenticeship in November 2021. Her license expired for the second time on April 5, 2023. Board members asked questions and discussed the request. It was noted that she would require the most current study materials from IHS and time to study before being authorized to take the exam.

Thereafter a motion was made by Dana Mario, seconded by Heather Hanley and VOTED (roll call); **to approve a 6-month extension of her apprenticeship with authorization to take the exam after two months of preparation.**

in-favor: Mario, Hanley, Adebayo, Beckner

opposed: Soto

Board Member Paul Beckner recused himself from the discussion of the next licensee.

Joseph Azzi, License HEA490 requested an extension of his apprenticeship to be able to work and take the International Hearing Society (IHS) exam. His sponsor, Christine Dobem, attended

the meeting with him. This was the first extension request for the licensee. Board members asked questions and discussed the request. It was noted that he had allowed his license to expire on 6/1/23 and had not requested an extension earlier.

Thereafter a motion was made by Dana Mario, seconded by Rony Soto and VOTED (roll call); **to approve an 8-month extension of his apprenticeship.**

in-favor: Mario, Adebayo, Hanley, Soto

opposed: none

recused: Beckner

Board Member Paul Beckner rejoined the meeting.

Joel Connaughton, License HEA491 (expired 6/1/23)

The licensee did not attend the meeting. Board staff had informed the licensee of the meeting via email and phone. The Board did not consider this extension request because the licensee was not present to answer questions.

APPRENTICESHIP SUPERVISION UPDATE

Ronald Urnetta, License HEA480 had been granted a six-month extension of his apprenticeship at the January 19, 2024 meeting. The Board requested that he attend the April meeting with his sponsor to update the Board about in-person supervision being provided by his employer, Beltone. Michelle La Riviere, Director of Professional Training at Beltone, attended the meeting with the licensee. The licensee's sponsor was not available because he had left the company. Ms. La Riviere stated that there was no problem with the licensee's skill set. Ms. La Riviere informed the Board that she stepped in to assist the licensee with exam preparation. The licensee indicated he was receiving eight hours per week of direct supervision. Heather Hanley asked whether it was company policy for the apprentice to work unsupervised. Ms. La Riviere responded that it was not and that it was based on the competency of the apprentice. Heather Hanley then asked how an apprentice was deemed independent before passing the exam. The Chair noted that the licensee needs a new sponsor and questioned how final approval of the apprentice's work could be given if a sponsor was not in the office. Heather Hanley suggested that the Board should add a Board discussion of Beltone practices to a future agenda.

Thereafter the Board gave direction to staff to follow up with the licensee and get his new sponsor information before he is authorized to take the exam again.

APPLICATION REVIEW

Craig Whitcomb -Application HESNE100048

The application for licensure via reciprocity was brought before the Board because the applicant did not have proof of completion of the IHS Distance Learning Course for Professionals in Hearing Health Sciences which is a regulatory requirement. The applicant is licensed in several states. The applicant submitted a letter to the Board requesting to substitute his Bachelor's Degree for the Distance Learning Course per 265 CMR: 4.03 (2)(b) and provided his college transcript. The Board discussed the application and noted that the college degree was not related to the field of hearing instrument technology.

Thereafter a motion was made by Rony Soto, seconded by Dana Mario and VOTED (roll call); **to require the applicant to provide proof of completion of the IHS Distance Learning Course to the Board in order to proceed in the licensing process.**

in-favor: Mario, Adebayo, Hanley, Soto, Beckner

opposed: none

DISCUSSION

Due to time constraints, the Executive Director suggested that the Board table its discussion of the 265 CMR Regulation Review Process until the July meeting.

Thereafter a motion was made by Heather Hanley, seconded by Elizabeth Adebayo and VOTED (roll call); **to table the 265 CMR Regulation Review Process discussion until the July board meeting.**

in-favor: Mario, Adebayo, Hanley, Soto, Beckner

opposed: none

NEW BUSINESS

None.

CLOSED SESSION

At 11:05 a.m. a motion was made by Chair Rony Soto, seconded by Heather Hanley and VOTED (roll call); **to end the public session and go into Closed Session per G.L. c. 112, § 65C for the purpose of reviewing cases in investigative conference.**

in-favor: Mario, Adebayo, Hanley, Soto, Beckner

opposed: none

NEW AND OPEN CASES

The Board took the following actions during closed session:

Investigative Case Conference: [Closed Session: G.L. c. 112, § 65C]

- *Docket Number HIS-2024-0001 – Sent to Prosecution*

ADJOURNMENT

At 11:45 a.m. a motion was made by Heather Hanley, seconded by Elizabeth Adebayo and VOTED (roll call); to end the closed session.

in-favor: Mario, Adebayo, Hanley, Soto, Beckner

opposed: none

Respectfully submitted,

Lisa M. Guglietta, Executive Director
Board of Registration of Hearing Instrument Specialists

Documents used by the Board during open session:

- *Posted agenda 4/19/2024*
- *Draft public meeting minutes of 1/19/24*
- *Application HESNE100048*