**Statutory Advisory Board (SAB)**

**April 2, 2024**

**Minutes**

SAB Attendees: Blair Wong, Brian MacDonald, and Kathy Petkauskos

MCB Staff Attendees: John Oliveira, Nathan Skrocki, Lucy Evangelidis, Loran Lang

Meeting Held via Zoom; Recordings made available to public on MCB YouTube channel

Public invited to participate through Q&A made at end of the meeting.

Minutes

Blair motions to accept the minutes from the March meeting. Minutes accepted.

Commissioner Update: John Oliveira

Visions of Collaboration Conference was a success.

John attended the National Federation for the Blind’s Annual Convention.

John attended the CSUN Technology Conference in Anaheim. He got the chance to test out a new mobility device called the Glide. He also got to test another product that you wear like a vest and different parts vibrate depending on where the obstacle is in front of you.

Budget update. We are looking forward to the 2025 budget. We are level funded in the Governor’s budget and we are in the middle of the process of getting that finalized.

Earmarks update. Our vendors are still servicing our consumers and that will continue until June 30th.

Dashboard Update: Nathan Skrocki

522 new registrations so far this year.

No real changes in open SR and Children’s cases. SR cases decreased by 9 from last month, children increased by 2, and DBES increased by 6.

Not a lot of changes in open VR cases. VR adults decreased by 3 and pre-ETS increased by 2.

SR closed cases for the calendar year: 32 children’s cases and 700 adults.

VR closed cases for the fiscal year: 120 successful closures and 73 unsuccessful closures.

188 referrals to support services for the calendar year. We are close to 2,000 COBs, 345 IDs, 49 EDPs, and 17 disabled placards.

We continue to work with the vendor to create the dashboard.

Brian asks for an update on SAB new member approvals. John says both candidates are currently in the background check process, which is the last step. Once they are cleared, resumes can be shared with the rest of the SAB before their first meeting.

Kathy shared her positive experience at the pre-ETS conference. Brian also attended and agrees with Kathy’s comments.

Blair asks how many technology conferences for the visually impaired are held annually here in Massachusetts and if there’s an opportunity to have a technology portion in the White Cane Day program. John says he will bring that suggestion to Ally Bull who organizes the event. CSUN is the leading conference in the country for assistive technology. There is also a conference in the Washington DC area as well as Florida. Brian shares that the biggest conference is in Germany.

Questions from the Public

Sharon Strzalkowski asks Nate why the COBs spike in June rather than during tax season. Nate says that is tax time for a lot of towns/cities. She also says she has enjoyed the podcasts that have been coming out.

Debbie M asks if there has been anymore progress on the Deputy Commissioner position. John says that the candidate is currently in the background check stage. The whole process is handled by our HR unit. Once the background check comes back there will be an official offer which will either be accepted or denied.

Kathy asks if the Deputy Commissioner focuses on VR. John says their role is to oversee all programs and services (VR, SR, and the regions).

John shares that we are always looking for ways to recruit people to work in the field of blindness. He will attend the NCSAB conference in Maryland where this will be discussed further with other state leaders.

Blair asks if anyone from MCB is doing anything to experience the solar eclipse. John says Perkins is doing something and it went out on MCB social media.

Meeting adjourned.