

**Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council Meeting
December 8, 2025, via Zoom
Council Meeting Minutes**

Present: Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Raquel Quezada, Sandra Heller, Alana Russo, Asha Abdullahi, Cynthia Laine, Cody Rooney, Timothy Cahill, Julisa Cully, Laura Sousa Wagner; Ann Lynch, Camille Karabaich, William Edes, Paul Lutfy, Carolyn Kain, Annette Peele, Lisa Sheehy, Chelsey Goddard, Katherine Beibel, Winnie Koko, Holly McCarthy, Melissa Bradley

Excused:

Absent: Cristina Cortez, Amber Pettell, Austin Carr, Bridget Levandowski, Chantal Johnson, Sarah Kelleher, Andrew Carr, Priscilla Bessa, Diane Lescinskas

Guests: N/A

Staff: Craig Hall, Lee Larriu, Andre Williams, Patricia Jackson, Jennifer Bertrand, Jackson Crilley, Liz Fancher, Adelia DelTrecco, Tamara Huntley, Kaitlin Stober, Chrissy Joyal

Raquel Quezada, Chairperson, convened the meeting at 6:02 pm, welcoming everyone.

1. Acceptance of the Agenda: Motion to accept passed unanimously.

First: Cody Rooney

Second: Carolyn Kain

Voting Poll Results: Passed

2. Approval of September Meeting Minutes: Motion to approve passed unanimously.

First: Carolyn Kain

Second: Cody Rooney

Voting Poll Results: Passed

3. Updates from the Chairperson, Raquel Quezada, Chairperson

Raquel stated that Joshua Gladstone, who was one of our contract employees, has left the MDDC. We have posted a position on the state's job website.

Next is our upcoming events. They are as follows:

- Tuesday, December 16, 2025 - PCA Workforce Meeting 1:30 to 3:30pm
- [Personal Care Attendant Workforce Council | Mass.gov](#)
- Tuesday, March 10, 2026 – MDDC/ARC Legislative Reception, 10-12pm State House, Boston, MA
- Wednesday, March 11, 2026 – MDDC Council Meeting
- Wednesday, June 10, 2026 – MDDC Council Meeting
- Wednesday, September 9, 2026 – MDDC Council Meeting

4. Committee Reports:

Executive Committee – Raquel Quezada, Chairperson.

Raquel asked Craig to provide a brief Executive Committee report. Craig recognized Raquel for her recent awards. He provided an update on current Fiscal Year 2026 budget debate. Craig also provided an overview of how the FY 2027- 2031 State Plan Preparations were moving forward as well as an update and a presentation of the 5 Year Performance Results. Raquel would be reestablishing the State Plan Committee and would request volunteers from the full Council.

Membership Committee –Cody Rooney, Vice Chairperson-Committee Chairperson; Adelia DelTrecco, Staff

Cody stated that the Membership Committee has sent up our reappointments to the Governor's Appointments office and we are still in need of 2 family member applicants. A family member is a parent/guardian/sibling. If you know of anyone that would be a great candidate for our Council, please let us know. Adelia sent you all an email with the application attached. We always welcome applications at any time both for individuals with developmental disabilities and family members. Please spread the word. Cody thanked everyone for all they do for our Council and for people with developmental disabilities.

Public Policy Committee – Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Committee Chairperson, Jennifer Bertrand, Staff

Gyasi Burks-Abbott offered a Policy Committee Update. The Policy Committee met two times on October 14 and November 18th since the June 2025 full Council meeting. In November 2025, the committee opened the Policy Committee meetings to the DD Community with 20 people registering. State/federal legislative/policy and state coalition updates were shared as well as information about Council policy activities and events. Partners updates were also shared.

In 2026, the MDDC Policy Committee will meet at 3PM on the second Tuesday in most months:

- January 13, 2026
- February 10, 2026
- April 14, 2026
- May 12, 2026
- June 9, 2026
- August 11, 2026
- October 13, 2026
- *November 17, 2026

**Veterans Day is November 10th, so the meeting is scheduled for the following Tuesday.*

Jennifer Bertrand offered a brief state and federal update. The Governor will file a state budget bill in the House (H.1) by January 22, 2026. MDDC will advocate around the state budget in multiple ways. The MDDC will collect and share stories from the I/DD community with state leaders and lawmakers

each step in the state budget process. We will distribute policy resources that highlight the importance of Medicaid-funded LTSS and Home and Community Based Services (HCBS) and workforce rates, and meet and collaborate with state leaders, administrators, and legislators to help ensure people with I/DD can maintain eligibility to services.

All MDDC Priority & Endorsed Legislation have had hearings, and most bills have received favorable committee reports. Go to the following link to view the status of our bills: [MDDC Priority & Endorsed Legislation | Mass.gov](#) The dignified language legislation was passed to be engrossed in the House. The policy to affirm and maintain equal access to public education for all children was rolled into another bill and signed into law.

The historic 43-day Government Shutdown ended with a Continuing Resolution (CR). In this spending package, most federal agencies and disability programs are funded through January 30, 2026. SNAP work requirements began in November 2025. SNAP is fully funded through 2026, however, legal immigrants and refugees are no longer eligible. States will be required to pay a portion of SNAP in 2026. States are awaiting federal guidance on Medicaid work requirements and eligibility redeterminations. Home and community-based services (HCBS) rate cuts are likely due to the significant reduction in federal Medicaid funding and the costs of new required systems.

The MDDC submitted a public comment regarding the proposed rule change to remove IDEA disproportionality data collection. Currently, states are required to collect “significant disproportionality” data, which includes information about race and ethnicity of students using special education to track:

- over/under identification of special education placement
- placement in segregated settings
- disciplinary action

This rule, under Part B of IDEA, is widely considered a civil rights safeguard. The Department of Education (DOE) has proposed removing this data collection requirement.

The MDDC attended the Massachusetts Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities’ November 4th Meeting the Moment event. This event was the first in a new series to bring together people with disabilities, families, advocates, and leaders from across MA. This event supported an open conversation on issues that are impacting communities. The night of the event was also election day, so the MDDC encouraged attendees to share how they are engaged voters!

Save the date for the 48th Annual Legislative Reception Tuesday, March 10, 2026, 10AM – 12PM in The Great Hall of Flags at MA State House.

5. Refresher – Advocacy vs. Lobbying – Craig Hall & Jennifer Bertrand

Craig & Jennifer have a refresher of the Advocacy versus Lobbying presentation was presented to the Full Council. Craig and Jennifer explained that it was important for Council Members to know how to represent the Council and not overstep the bounds of educating and informing policymakers.

6. State Plan Overview – Craig Hall and Staff

Craig introduced an overview of MDDC planning for the 2027- 2031 State Plan. Kaitlin presented on how the State Plan process will work for Massachusetts with a concept and facilitated an interactive “big idea’ brainstorming session.

7. Self-Advocacy & Training Team Update – Lee Larriu and Staff

Lee, Tamara & Andre talked about conference highlights- At the annual Massachusetts Advocates Standing Strong Conference in Norwood, MA, both Council members and staff were in attendance. Andre Williams delivered the keynote address, focusing on the power of community, the history of self-advocacy, and the mentors who shaped his path. Council member Cody Rooney co-presented the Sandra Houghton of the Year Award, sponsored by MDDC and MASS, to Patti Quateire. The MDDC Self-Advocacy and Training Team also led a legislative workshop titled “*The Power of Your Story.*” Personal Care Attendant (PCA) Committee Updates- Staff member Tamara Huntley provided an overview of upcoming 2026 PCA Program changes, including updates to IRS exemption rules, CORI and SORI requirements, and the New Hire paperwork process. Additional details are available at <https://tempusunlimited.org/pca-program-changes/> The next PCA Workforce Council Meeting will be held on December 16 from 1:30–3:30 PM and is open to the public, with more information available on the PCA Workforce Council website. <https://www.mass.gov/orgs/personal-care-attendant-workforce-council>

Podcast Announcement-Tamara Huntley announced her upcoming podcast, “*Communicating Clearly with People Who Have Disabilities,*” produced through Health Literacy Out Loud. The podcast aims to educate health providers and researchers on disability-related communication topics and is scheduled to launch on January 1, 2026. www.healthliteracyoutloud.com

Teach Disability History Campaign- Andre Williams shared updates on the Teach Disability History campaign, a collaboration with Easter Seals. Council member Cody Rooney is working with a youth organization to draft a bill that would require disability history to be taught in Massachusetts schools, with the next planning meeting scheduled before Christmas. Andre is also developing a new video about Temple Grandin, highlighting her contributions to animal science, autism advocacy, and animal welfare, with filming expected to begin in the new year.

Transition Fair Participation- MDDC hosted a table at the 4th Annual Transition Fair in Agawam, MA, alongside 25 other agencies. The event drew more than 60 attendees, providing youth in transition and their families with opportunities to learn about available services and supports to help ease the transition process.

Employment & Training Programs- The Fall Employment Series, which began in October, concluded on November 20 with 14 graduates. Participants showcased final projects, including Tyler’s goal of becoming a dog trainer and Angela’s pursuit of college opportunities. The December Self-Esteem Series includes 12 participants, and due to high demand, another session is planned for January. Additional training opportunities are scheduled through the month of April and can be found on the council’s website. www.mass.gov/mddc

8. Other Business – N/A

9. Council Meeting Survey - Raquel stated that a link to our Council Meeting Survey has been sent to your email, we ask that you please take 3 mins and complete the survey for us.

10. Adjournment

Motion to adjourn was approved unanimously.

First: Sandra Heller Second: Alana Russo

Voting Poll Results: Passed

The meeting was adjourned at 8:10pm.

Alana Russo

Review/ Approved
Alana Russo, Secretary

_____ Jan 14 2026 _____

Date:

__ Craig Hall /s/s _____

Review/Approved
Craig Hall, Executive Director

Jan. 8, 2026

Date: