**Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council Meeting**

**June 11, 2025, via Zoom**

**Council Meeting Minutes**

**Present:** Gyasi Burks-Abbott, Raquel Quezada, Sandra Heller, Elaine Gabovitch, Alana Russo, Asha Abdullahi, Cynthia Laine, Cody Rooney, Timothy Cahill, Austin Carr, Amber Pettell, Cindy Thomas, Barbara L’Italien; Emily Lauer

**Excused:** Ann Lynch, Chelsey Goddard, Paul Lufty, Annette Peele, William Edes, Camille Karabaich

**Absent:** Winnie Koko, Carolyn Kain, Cristina Cortez, Bridget Levandowski, Tatiana Thomas, Chantal Johnson, Sarah Kelleher, Katherine Beibel, Andrew Carr, Priscilla Bessa, Diane Lescinskas

**Guests:** Kelsey Oates, Michelle Intravaia

**Staff:** Craig Hall, Lee Larriu, Andre Williams, Patricia Jackson, Jennifer Bertrand, Jackson Crilley, Mary Davis, Liz Fancher, Adelia DelTrecco, Joshua Gladstone, Tamara Huntley

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: Alana Russo

Voting Poll Results: Passed

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

First: Sandra Heller Second: Cody Rooney

Voting Poll Results: Passed

3. **Updates from the Chairperson, Raquel Quezada, Chairperson**

Raquel congratulated Craig Hall, our Executive Director, who now has more than 31 years of service in state government and has been through 8 gubernatorial administrations. And she also congratulated MDDC staff member, Adelia DelTrecco, on her 40-year work anniversary.

Raquel shared other exciting news – 2 of our Council members; Austin and Tatiana had a magazine article published in Impact magazine (run by the University of Minnesota’s UCEDD). They talk about creating and leading their group Access 2 Community and Friendship! Congratulations Austin and Tatiana

Raquel expressed that it is with our deepest sympathy that we announce the passing of Daniel Houghton. Dan was a former MDDC Vice Chair, Mass Advocate Standing Strong board member and loving husband for over 25 years to Sandy Houghton, a retired employee of the MDDC. May he rest in sweetest peace.

Some other great news: Jennifer, Kaitlin and Gyasi will be presenting at the upcoming The ARC National Conference of Executives (NCE) Summer Institute on the Paul W. Spooner Generational Leadership Model in July.

Raquel invited Elaine Gabovitch to make an announcement. Elaine shared with the Council that she will be retiring in June. We wish you the best Elaine and thank you for your service.

Raquel shared our upcoming events. They are as follows:

* Monday, July 14-16, 2025 – The National Conference of Executives Summer Leadership Institute
* Wednesday, July 23rd – ADA35 Celebration, 12:00pm Boston City Hall Plaza
* Monday, August 4-6th – National Conference of State Legislatures – Convention Center, Boston
* Wednesday, September 10th – MDDC Council Meeting
* Monday, Sept. 29-Oct. 1st – Generational Leadership Summitt

Wednesday, September 10th MDDC Council Meeting

Monday, Sept. 29th – October 1st Generational Leadership Summitt

Wednesday, December 10th MDDC Council Meeting

Raquel stated that due to schedule Conflicts the Gopen and Crocker Fellow presentations will be moved up on the agenda. However, for meeting minute purposes we are leaving them in the format to follow the agenda that everyone has received.

**4. Committee Reports:**

**Executive Committee – Raquel Quezada, Chairperson**.

Raquel deferred the report to Craig Hall.

Craig explained the FY 26 Budget Update. Generational Leadership Summit 2025 – applications are open for September 29,30, October 1. Raquel noted that she would be a part of the support at the summit. National Conference of State Legislators in Boston this August. This is an event co shared with NACDD. Craig, Raquel, Jennifer and Kirsten Murphy, NACDD president would be staffing exhibit booth.

Craig explained that US Administration for Community Living would release Annual Work Plan template for FFY26 – Information and Form expected by end of June.

The State Plan Committee will need to be reactivated. Raquel will chair. Craig was tasked with reconvening Council Members for the committee. This is (year 5 of 5-year State Plan) – update to workplan is to be submitted by August 15.

Craig is exploring a nonprofit task force – Craig described his idea to identify funds for Generational Leadership Summit and to study the three DDCs that have converted to nonprofits as both revenue additions and contingency if federal policy and funding significantly changes. MDDC is hosting a discussion with several state agency disability executives and the Assistant Secretary Annette von Kalckreuth is in charge of Participation and Interests for People with Disabilities within the German Federal Ministry of Labor and Social Affairs. Craig and other state agency heads will hold a discussion. Raquel will offer a greeting.

The next Executive Director’s Office Hour – Craig explained that he would be reviewing Council Member professional responsibilities, etiquette and the public facing perceptions. The theme will be “role, responsibility and conduct” at next Executive Director’s Office Hour.

Craig also asked the DD Network to give an update on the Federal Policy and Budgeting on each of their entities. Barbara L’Italien stated the Disability Law Center received 2/3 of their federal funding from the federal government. Their Individual and Developmental Disability funding is level funded however they have other funding in other programs that are being zeroed out.

Cindy Thomas from the Institute for Community Inclusion (ICI) spoke about UCCED’s - Cindy stated that the Federal Health and Human Services budget is eliminating them. They expect to get funding for this fiscal year from July 1st – June 30, 2026, as it has already been committed. Their goal is to continue to educate the importance of the purpose of their work in the hopes that they will be able to do the important work they do.

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

Cody stated that we currently have 3 vacancies that we will need to fill. (1 spot for an individual with intellectual and developmental disabilities and 2 spots for parent/guardian/family member). We received 3 applications. The committee reviewed the 3 applications and scheduled interviews with all 3 applicants. 2 of the applicants were individuals with developmental disabilities and the other applicant could serve as both. Interviews happened except for the 3rd applicant (applicant that could serve as both) since she did not show up for the interview and did not respond to any other emails thereafter.

Of the 2 applicants with developmental disabilities, the committee decided to choose Melissa Bradley to move forward. However, we are still in need of 2 parent/guardian/family members.

Melissa is from Revere and has her bachelor’s degree in early childhood education from Salem State University. Melissa is a strong advocate and has excellent interpersonal and communication skills and is compassionate and a highly motivated team player. She also has lots of volunteer work and looks forward to advocating for policies and bills and is a great public speaker. She would love to be more involved and active in the community and advocating for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities. Cody asked that the Council endorse Melissa Bradley to move forward.

**Approval of Endorsement of Potential New Council Member – Melissa Bradley**

**Motion** to approve passed unanimously**.**

First: Sandra Heller Second: Alana Russo

Voting Poll Results: Passed

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

Gyasi introduced the policy committee, reviewing over past meeting topics and dates for future policy committee meetings.

Recent Policy Team Activities and Legislative Updates:

* Gyasi invited Jennifer to share the recent and ongoing work/accomplishments the Policy team has conducted (see slides for reference)
* Gyasi invited Josh to present both a state legislative and budget update as well as a brief federal overview
  + Bills are in committee and legislative hearings have begun - some with little notice. There were 4 MDDC bills scheduled for hearings that week alone. (see slides for reference)
  + The House and Senate have each passed FY26 state budget bill proposals. A six-person conference committee will review it before sending to the Govenor.
    - More details on the state budget are available from the The Arc.
  + On May 22, the House passed a reconciliation bill, the One Big Beautiful Bill Act.
    - Likely reduce federal Medicaid spending by $723 billion.
    - Likely lead to 7.6 million uninsured people
    - Work requirements for the expansion group would increase barriers to enrolling in and renewing Medicaid coverage
    - The Senate is working on their version of the FFY26 budget bill which is expected to look different than the House bill, and could significantly impact [Medicaid](https://www.kff.org/medicaid/issue-brief/allocating-cbos-estimates-of-federal-medicaid-spending-reductions-and-enrollment-loss-across-the-states/).

Gyasi presented an action item with a Policy Committee Recommendation for the adoption of Additional Proposed Bills (in need of Full Council Vote). Gyasi asked Jennifer to speak on this. (see slides for reference. Gyasi called for a vote.

**Motion** to approve the additional proposed bills:

First: Gyasi Burks-Abbott Second: Sandra Heller

Voting Poll Results: Passed

Gyasi introduced recent and upcoming events for the Policy Team. Gyasi, Jennifer, and Josh spoke briefly on each respective event.

**5. Grants Update/Presentation – Gopen Fellowship Presentation – Kelsey Oates,** **Liz Fancher, Staff**

Kelsey Oates presented her Gopen Fellowship project, the “Self-Advocacy Wins” app ([www.SelfAdvocacyWins.com](http://www.SelfAdvocacyWins.com).)   Kelsey used her creative and technical skills to develop the app as a social media solution for self-advocates who want to find friends, dating partners and jobs. She designed it to be fun, safe and accessible for a wide range of disabilities.  The app includes a function for self-advocate supporters to view chats and activities.  Targeted groups for outreach include providers, teachers, self-advocates and transition programs.  During her Fellowship Kelsey also presented at conferences, organized a “speed friending” event and recorded several podcasts with self-advocates. A life-changing experience for her.

**6. Grants Update/Presentation – Crocker Fellow Presentation – Michelle Intravaia, Liz Fancher, Staff**

Crocker Fellow Michelle Intravaia created a “Playdates and Pals” program for community inclusion through play.  Her project connected local teenagers with younger children with disabilities.   Teens went to the homes of the families they were matched with at least twice per month for playdates.  Teens learned about kids with different abilities, and parents who remained in the home could attend to other tasks.  Michelle arranged to have her local TV station record and air a video about her project.  She shared the video on social media to recruit additional participants.  Through her Crocker Fellowship, she developed strong connections with people and organizations in her community.  Michelle intends to replicate her project in other communities.  A life-changing experience for her.

Liz Fancher announced that the 2025-26 Gopen and Crocker Fellowships are being paused for 2025-26.  This is due to the current federal funding uncertainties among the DD network partners who sponsor the Fellowships (Institute for Community Inclusion at UMass Boston, E.K. Shriver Center at UMass Chan Medical School, Disability Law Center and MDDC.)

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

The Training Team sent an update to all Council members with their updates prior to the meeting in order to give Cody Rooney an opportunity to present his experience at the National Youth Employment Coalition Annual Conference 2025 he attended.

**8. Other Business – Conflict of Interest Policy/Form**

Raquel stated that Adelia will be emailing you all the Conflict-of-Interest Policy and Form. Please complete the acknowledgement form and return it to her.

**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: Austin Carr Second: Cody Rooney

Voting Poll Results: Passed

The meeting was adjourned at 7:19pm.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Alana Russo\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Review/ Approved

Alana Russo, Secretary Date: 8/4/2025

Craig Hall /s/

Review/Approved

Craig Hall, Executive Director Date: 8/4/2025