

Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities

Commission Meeting

Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, March 13th, 2024

Time: 10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Place: Hybrid

In Person Hearing Room A2

MA State House

24 Beacon Street,

Boston, MA, 02108

Members Present	
1	Gyasi Burks-Abbott – LEND Faculty, Boston Children’s Hospital/UMass Boston Institute for Community Inclusion
2	Charles Carr – Disability Policy Consortium
3	Representative Denise Garlick – House of Representatives
4	Craig Hall – Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
5	Representative Kay Khan – House of Representatives
6	Andrew Levrault – Disabled Persons Protection Commission
7	Ann Lynch – Massachusetts Attorney General’s Office
8	Reginal Marshall – Advocates
9	Oswald Mondejar – Mucho Gusto Consulting
10	Representative Mathew Muratore – House of Representatives
11	Bridget Murphy – Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin
12	Angela Ortiz – Partners for Youth with Disabilities
13	Kathy Petkauskos – University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
14	Carl Richardson – State House ADA Coordinator
15	Rachel Stanton – State Treasurer’s Office
16	Meghan Todd – City of Framingham
17	Christopher White – Road to Responsibility, Inc (RTR)
Members Not Present	
18	Representative Gerard Cassidy – House of Representatives
19	Nancy Garr-Colzie – Member, Worcester Disability Commission; Board Chair, Center for Living and Working
20	Felix Martinez
21	Senator Patrick O’Connor – Senate

Proceedings

- Welcome, Roll Call, Approval of 3.13.24 meeting minutes
- MA Department of Economic Research (DER): People with Disabilities in the Massachusetts Labor Force Presentation by Director of Strategic Engagement Charles Pearce and Senior Applied Economist David Jan
 1. Q&A Discussion
 - It's impactful and reaffirming that the state has tasked this department with focusing on the population of persons with disabilities.
 - The data reflects individuals with disabilities who are currently employed or unemployed, but it does not account for the larger population of individuals with disabilities who aspire to join the workforce.
 - This research serves as a crucial link to these individuals, helping to understand the impact of remote work on their ability to participate in the workforce.
 - When discussing pay, it's important to consider the current roles filled by individuals with disabilities as well as the impact of part-time work on their benefits.
 - Was Valerie Bradley from the Human Services Research Institute engaged in this work?
 - Not yet, happy to reach out and discuss. We welcome feedback and aim to keep this as an iterative process.
 - Does the data highlight intersectionality, such as the employment status of people with disabilities who are also people of color?
 - We do have breakdown by race and ethnicity.
 - Could we include the hourly wage data for people with disabilities compared to the rest of the population? This could help address disparities between full-time and part-time work and shed light on broader structural issues affecting people with disabilities.
 - We are planning to incorporate this analysis going forward.
 - Not having direct support professionals: getting ready in the morning, getting

accompanied to work. A lot of those people are from POC/migrants. Correlation with other indexes. Significant barriers. What is the disability to understand the type to understand why they aren't in the workforce but want to be.

- Would Secretary Jones invite DER to counsel Commonwealth Corporation Board of Directors?
 - We have met with their Diversity, Inclusion and Accessibility team. Once our dashboard is ready to launch, we would love to meet with the Board.
- Have transportation issues been analyzed regarding work related needs?
 - We haven't looked into transportation yet. We will keep that in mind for the next iteration.
- Language access is another major barrier along with transportation.
- People with disabilities in MA are 50% more likely to work part-time, possibly due to concerns about losing their benefits or a lack of understanding of how their benefits might be affected. There are two benefits counseling programs designed to help with this issue, but they have been severely underfunded for 24 years, receiving only level funding during this period. As a result, these programs cannot reach as many people as needed to educate them on the benefits landscape and the potential financial advantages of working. There is a significant demand for these services, but the resources available are insufficient to meet this need.
 - However, some individuals with disabilities may find it difficult to manage a full-time job, but they can often engage in consulting work or work remotely.
- Employers and Remote Work: While there's been a significant increase in remote work, many employers are now requiring employees to return to the office. It's crucial to educate employers about the importance of

accommodations for continuing remote work, emphasizing flexibility to help retain employees with disabilities. Back-to-office policies should be adaptable, recognizing that it's often challenging for people with disabilities to find employment. Supporting employers in maintaining these employees is essential.

- Can we ask if they are following/considering recent proposed changes to how the census counts disability and if they have thoughts about that?
 - This issue has been particularly challenging for us. Our constraints lie in the data we use, which is sourced from the census. The categorization of disability types has been a recurring topic, especially regarding whether we can align census categories with those accepted by the community. We are open to receiving further feedback on this matter.
- Another key barrier is the lack of direct support professionals, who are essential for many individuals to get ready in the morning and provide assistance at their job. Many of these professionals are Black, immigrant, single mothers. This intersectionality often correlates with other indices, highlighting how the shortage of direct support professionals significantly impacts workplace accessibility. There are many nuances within this community that must be considered.
- More questions and comments from the chat:
 - Is there any data capturing the number of workers with disabilities who require on-the-job support from a job coach, whether short or long term?
 - In the data we collect, transportation and scheduling issues are the top reasons why employment is turned down.
 - Many job seekers and employees prefer part-time work because full-time employment is too demanding due to stamina and disability management. This concern is compounded by the fear of losing benefits.
- Governor's Budget

1. The Commission continues to be level-funded at \$150,000.
 2. The line item is augmented in the statutory language by other commissions, including those on the status of African Americans, Black Men and Boys, and Latinos and Latinas, each allocated \$150,000. Additionally, there is a shared reserve fund of \$200,000 for all commissions. We are actively collaborating with these commissions to discuss how they can access these funds and how we can share the resources effectively.
 3. Health equity- Both Oz Mondejar and Chair Garlick are committed to strengthening our partnership with the Health Equity Compact and will continue their efforts in this area.
 4. Fernald school- Many people share the same concerns. Numerous records were found and made public. Upon notification, the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) acted swiftly. The property now belongs to the City of Waltham. An external source is now handling confidentiality and archiving these materials. DDS was genuinely horrified by the news and has moved quickly to address the issue.
- Subcommittees Reports
 1. Disability Employment:
 - We are developing a video that spotlights successful small to medium sized employers in this area, highlighting their value to the company. This video will be shared with the larger employer community through chambers of commerce. We have outlined key topics for employers to discuss, including value, recruiting, DEI, and remote work as accommodations. The video will also cover outreach strategies, calls to action, and how to engage and respond to employers.
 - The goal is to educate employers about the benefits of hiring people with disabilities, supported by research and success stories. This initiative aims to raise awareness in our state's business community, demonstrating that people with disabilities make excellent employees. The video will apply a business-to-business model, showcasing how these employers achieved success and the value it brought to their companies. We will share this video with regional collaboratives, chambers of

commerce, public state agencies, for-profit and non-profit organizations, and other partners and champions throughout the state.

2. Workforce Supports:

- Gaining more insights into the workforce support crisis:
 - Valerie Bradley from the Human Services Research Institute provided a comprehensive overview and strategies regarding the workforce crisis and what other states are doing nationwide. Her presentation can be found [here](#).
 - Patricia Wu, Director of Workforce Policy from the Executive Office on Health and Human Services, will address the state's response to current challenges and act as a bridge between EOHHS and HSRI in July.

3. Legislative and Budget:

- Chair Garlick welcomed Charlie Carr back and thanked Carl for stepping in as co-chair.
- Chair Garlick proposed the renaming of this subcommittee such as the Communications and Outreach subcommittee.
- Chair Garlick shared that she and Imene met with the Progressive Caucus. The request was for the Commission to actively conduct research and seek information beyond what some stakeholder groups might provide and share it with them.
- This subcommittee discussed what directions this group should take. We invited Rep. Cutler who provided us with some guidance and ideas.
 - We hosted the MA Rehabilitation Commission who came in and educated us on their [Employer Campaign](#).
 - In April, Maura Sullivan from the Arc of MA will present her materials for demystifying the legislative process for people with disabilities and share their legislative priorities and tracking methods.
 - We are hoping to work with the legislature to bring back a Disability Caucus.

- Charlie shared that the subcommittee should take a look at the impact of MassHealth reductions in the Personal Care Attendant (PCA) program.
 - This subcommittee could present research the impact and unattended consequences.
- October 2024 Signature Event
 1. Theme is proposed to be about health equity and voting rights.
 - Looking for 4 people to be on the planning committee.
 - Reach out to Imene directly.
- Commissioner Announcements
 1. Carl shared that the Joint Ways and Means Committee's 5-hour hearing on health and human services included captions and deaf interpreters, ensuring the deaf community could fully understand the proceedings.
 2. Oz shared that he is meeting with Michael Curry from the HEC to ensure that the intersection of race, ethnicity, and disability is being captured and will update the commission.
 3. Gyasi shared that AFAM will host its Autism Advocacy Day on April 9 at the State House <http://www.afamaction.org/2024-autism-advocacy-day/#page-content>
 4. Charlie shared that the [Paul Spooner Generational Leadership Workshop](#) event last fall was very successful and that they are bringing it back this coming fall. 20 new young emerging disabled leaders, and bringing back some people who went to the training last year. More information to come.
 5. Angela shared that [Partners for Youth with Disabilities Youth Leadership Forum](#) will be June 24-2, hosting 50 young adults with various disabilities with Emerson College. Will be reaching out to Chair Garlick's office to be involved again.
 6. Kathy shared that she and Imene are meeting with a senior reporter from New England Public Radio to talk about disability employment and the subcommittee's work.
- Adjournment