

MEETING THE MOMENT SERIES

A Community Conversation and Resource Fair - UMass Lowell

Friday, March 27, 2026

Our Purpose

- An introduction to the work of the Commission and its impact across Massachusetts.
- To convene, collaborate and communicate to strengthen the disability community including all individuals, families, allies, advocates, providers and state agencies.

Our Mission and Statutory Charge

To advance **equity, inclusion, and opportunity** for **people with disabilities** across the Commonwealth through communication, connection, and collaboration.

Established by the Legislature to:

- Study and advise on barriers to access, employment, and opportunity.
- Promote inclusion and equity across public and private sectors
- Strengthen collaboration among state agencies, local disability commissions, and advocacy organizations.

How We Advance Our Mission

The Commission's mission comes to life through three subcommittees:

- **Disability Employment:** expanding inclusive hiring and opportunity.
- **Workforce Supports:** strengthening the direct care and human services workforce
- **Long-Term Services & Supports and Health Equity:** advancing equitable access to care and community living.

Meet Our Commissioners - Executive Board

- **The Honorable Denise Garlick**, Commission Elected Chair, Appointed by the Governor
- **Christopher White**, Commission Elected Vice Chair, President & CEO, Road to Responsibility, Appointed by the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers Inc.
- **Carl Richardson**, Commission Elected Treasurer, ADA Coordinator/504 Diversity Officer, Massachusetts State House, Appointed by the Senate President
- **Oswald Mondejar**, Commission Elected Clerk, President, Mucho Gusto Consulting, Appointed by the Governor

Meet Our Commissioners - Subcommittee Chairs

- **Gyasi Burks-Abbott**, Disability Employment Subcommittee Co-Chair, Self-Advocate, Faculty, LEND Program, Boston Children's Hospital and UMass Boston's Institute for Community Inclusion, Governor Appointee
- **Rachel Kaprielian**, Chief Executive Officer, Triangle, Inc., Appointed by the Governor
- **Leo Sarkissian**, Workforce Supports Chair, The Arc of Massachusetts, Appointed by the Governor
- **Charles Carr**, Long Term Services and Supports and Health Equity Subcommittee Co-Chair, Legislative Liaison for the Disability Policy Consortium, Disability Policy Consortium Appointee
- **Carl Richardson**, Long Term Services and Supports and Health Equity Subcommittee Co-Chair, ADA Coordinator/504 Diversity Officer, Massachusetts State House, Senate President Appointee

Meet Our Commissioners – Appointed & Designated Members

- **Nancy Garr-Colzie**, Member & Board Chair, Worcester Disability Commission, Center for Living & Working, Appointed by the Governor
- **Victoria Gill**, Director of Learning, Development and Innovative Projects, Disabled Persons Protection Commission Designee
- **Craig Hall**, Executive Director, Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council, Appointed by Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
- **Representative Vanna Howard**, State Representative, Massachusetts House of Representatives, Appointed by the Speaker of the House
- **Representative Jay Livingstone**, State Representative, Massachusetts House of Representatives, Appointed by the Speaker of the House
- **Ann Lynch**, Assistant Attorney General, Disability Rights Coordinator, Massachusetts Attorney General's Office, Appointed by the Attorney General's Office

Meet Our Commissioners – Appointed & Designated Members

- **Representative John Marsi**, State Representative, Massachusetts House of Representatives, Appointed by the House Minority Leader
- **Regina Marshall**, Chief Operating Officer, Advocates, Appointed by the Senate President
- **Bridget Murphy**, Project Manager, Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth, William Francis Galvin, Appointed by the State Secretary
- **Senator Patrick O'Connor**, State Senator, Massachusetts Senate, Appointed by the Senate Minority Leader
- **Angela Ortiz**, Chief Executive Officer, Massachusetts Health Council, Appointed by the Governor

Meet Our Commissioners – Appointed & Designated Members

- **Kathy Petkauskos**, Executive Director, Workplace Equity and Inclusion, Work Without Limits, ForHealth Consulting, University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School, Appointed by the University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
- **Representative Lindsay Sabadosa**, State Representative, Massachusetts House of Representatives, Appointed by the Speaker of the House
- **Rachel Stanton**, Disability Employment Subcommittee Co-Chair, Investor Relations & Communications Designer, Clean Water Trust | Debt Management, Treasurer's Office Designee
- **Lexi Semanchik**, HR Marketing & Communications Specialist, State Treasurer and Receiver General's Office, Treasurer's Office Designee #2

Accessibility in Practice

- Public meetings with CART and ASL
- Accessible meeting materials
- Commitment to inclusive and accessible convening
- Vendors are people with disabilities and/or organizations that employ people with disabilities

Why this matters: these practices reflect our commitment to inclusion and participation in its work.

Thank you!

Contact

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MASSACHUSETTS



COMMISSION ON THE STATUS
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES



[Scan the QR Code to visit
the Commission's website!](#)





MassAbility

NextGen Careers Strategic Director Michelle Banks
Communications Coordinator Sarah Malone

What we do & our role:

MassAbility empowers people with disabilities to live life on their own terms.

Our services and programs help people work, live, and thrive in their community.

Collaborating with the Commission helps us understand the needs of people we support.



Services Overview:

- **Career Services**
- **Home & Community Life Services**
- **Supported & Independent Living**
- **Assistive Technology**
- **Brain Injury Services**
- **School-to-Employment Transitions**
- **Disability Determination**
- **Benefits Counseling**



NextGen Careers

MassAbility received a 5-year grant to develop a program to improve long-term career outcomes for individuals with disabilities.

This temporary funding let us try innovative ideas and create new ways to support the career development of young adults with disabilities ages 18-30.

Now that the program is done, we're integrating what we learned into our Career Services programs.

NextGen Careers Core Components

- **Dedicated resource team**
 - **Career Counselor, Benefits Specialist, Peer Mentors, Family Partners, Employment Success Specialists, and more**
- **Internships & Apprenticeships**
 - **Work-based learning opportunities and career pathways**
- **Skill Development & Support (Self-CAReS)**
 - **Self-Advocacy, Independence, and more**
- **Extended Career Support**

How are we integrating what we learned?

We collected and reviewed data and feedback from participants, staff, and employment partners.

Now we are planning how to best integrate what we learned in:

- **Family Partnership**
- **Early Job Placement Specialist Involvement**
- **Self-CAReS Learning Experience**
- **Career Portfolios**

Digital Accessibility

Much like the “curb cut theory”, making information accessible to people with disabilities benefits everyone.

Examples:

- **Heading structure**
- **Alt Text, image descriptions, captions, transcripts**
- **PDF tagging and reading order**
- **Clarity & reading Level**
- **ASL, CART services**
- **Design: decorative vs informative**

Digital Accessibility at MassAbility

We're working to create a culture that prioritizes and values accessibility. Here's how:

Big Picture:

- **Develop new internal procedures**
- **Train staff on digital accessibility**
- **Update website pages & materials**
- **Continue ASL & CART services for virtual events**

The Details:

- **Revise website language for simplicity**
- **Screen-reader compatibility (web & documents, PDFs)**
- **Media: captions, transcripts, and others**

How Digital Accessibility Impacts You

The way information is displayed can make a big difference in accessibility.

You'll see more user-friendly webpages and documents.

This will make content easier to navigate, read, and understand, like:

- **Proper heading structures and fewer tables**
- **Informational versus decorative design**

An overview of DDS

Commissioner Sarah Peterson



DDS



Massachusetts Office on Disability

**Executive Director
Allan Motenko**

