MASSACHUSETTS
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

Massachusetts Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities Commission Meeting
Meeting Minutes

Date of Meeting: Wednesday, September 16, 2026
Time: 11:00 am – 12:30 pm
Place: Hybrid
In Person Hearing Room 222
MA State House
24 Beacon Street,
Boston, MA, 02108
Access to the recording: recording

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	The Honorable Denise Garlick
4	Craig Hall – Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council
5	Senator Vanna Howard – Senate
6	Rachel Kaprielian – Triangle, Inc.
7	Representative Jay Livingstone – House of Representatives
8	Ann Lynch – Massachusetts Attorney General's Office
9	Representative John Marsi – House of Representatives
10	Oswald Mondejar – Mucho Gusto Consulting
11	Bridget Murphy – Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth Willian Francis Galvin
12	Kathy Petkauskos – University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
13	Leo Sarkissian – The Arc of Massachusetts PRESENT
14	Christopher White – Road to Responsibility, Inc (RTR) PRESENT
Members Not Present	
15	Victoria Gill – Disabled Persons Protection Commission
16	Nancy Garr-Colzie – Your Access Advocates
17	Senator Patrick O'Connor – Senate
18	Victoria Gill – Disabled Persons Protection Commission
19	Regina Marshall – Advocates
20	Carl Richardson – State House ADA Coordinator
21	Representative Lindsay Sabadosa – House of Representatives
22	Lexi Semanchik – State Treasurer's Office

23	Rachel Stanton – State Treasurer's Office
24	Meghan Todd – City of Framingham Rachel Stanton – State Treasurer's Office

Advisory Council Members Present
Keith Jones – SoulTouchin' Experiences LLC
Sarah Peterson – Massachusetts Department of Developmental Services
Kay Schoucair – Boston Center for Independent Living
Jody Nash – Cardinal Cushing Centers
Collin Fedor – MassHealth, Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Joannah Whitney – Community Consultant
Shakira Alvarez – TRIO Student Support Services Program at Westfield State University
Nora Bent – The Arc of Massachusetts
Erin Weinman – MicroTek, Inc.
Linda Long – University of Massachusetts Chan Medical School
Parker Koppelman – Liberty Mutual Insurance
Laura Stout – Blue Cross Blue Shield of Massachusetts
Joe Buizon – Massachusetts Commission for the Blind

Proceedings

1. Welcome, Roll Call, Approval of June Meeting Minutes
    - Motion to approve June meeting minutes was made and seconded.
    - Motion approved.

2. Message from the Chair
    - Chair Garlick recognized Commissioner Angela Ortiz, who is leaving the Commission, and thanked her for her service, commitment, and contributions.
    - Announced two sponsorships approved by the Executive Board:
        - **Paul W. Spooner Leadership Summit:** $1,500 sponsorship in honor of the late Commissioner Paul Spooner, supporting the development of emerging disability leaders across Massachusetts.
        - **Disability Policy Consortium's 30th Anniversary Gala:** $1,500 sponsorship in honor of Commissioner Charles Carr, who will receive the Visionary Changemaker Award in recognition of his leadership and advocacy.
    - Provided an update on the July *Meeting the Moment* community conversation in Northampton, thanking Representative Lindsay Sabadosa, MassAbility, the Northampton Senior Center, and Northampton Open Media for their partnership. Participant feedback was positive:
        - More than 90% rated their overall experience as positive or very positive, with nearly 60% rating it very positive.
        - Over 80% found the resources and information shared very useful.
        - More than 90% reported feeling more connected to community resources or organizations.
    - Shared plans for the next *Meeting the Moment* conversation, tentatively scheduled for November on the South Shore. Emphasized the importance of physical accessibility and technology that supports meaningful participation for both in-person and virtual attendees. Commissioners and Advisory Council members were encouraged to recommend potential venues and community partners.
    - Provided updates on the upcoming **October 7 National Disability Employment Awareness Month celebration**, thanking the Planning Committee for its work and noting that more than 260 people had registered.
        - **Legislative Honorees:** Senator Joan Lovely and Representative Sean Garballey.
        - **Employer Honorees:** The Langham, Boston and Disability Policy Consortium (Small-to-Mid-Size Employers), and Eastern Bank (Large Employer).
        - **Direct Support Professional Honoree:** Micah Fleisig of JVS.
    - Highlighted the afternoon panel, *Artificial Intelligence, Disability, and the Future of Work*, scheduled for 2:00–3:30 PM, which will examine the opportunities and challenges of AI in the workplace, including

accessibility, hiring, recruitment, and disability inclusion.

3. Joint Presentation from Elizabeth LaMontagne, Chief Operating Officer at MassHealth and Hannah Frigand, Senior Director of the HelpLine and Public Programs at Health Care For All. Topic: OB3: Federal Changes Impacting MassHealth
    - Presentation highlights:
        - The presentation outlined major federal Medicaid eligibility changes under OB3, including changes to coverage for certain immigrants beginning October 2026; new work and education requirements, six-month renewals for certain adults, and reduced retroactive coverage beginning January 2027; and additional cost-sharing requirements beginning October 2028.
        - Approximately **310,000 MassHealth members** were identified as potentially affected by the new work and education requirements. MassHealth began notifying these members in August 2026, with additional outreach planned through email, text messages, and automated phone calls.
        - Beginning January 2027, certain adults ages 19–64 will be required to meet work or education requirements to maintain coverage. Qualifying activities include working, volunteering, participating in a work program, or attending school. Members may satisfy the requirement through 80 hours of qualifying activity per month or monthly earnings of at least $580.
        - The presentation outlined exemptions for certain populations, including people with disabilities, individuals with qualifying medical conditions, pregnant and postpartum members, and parents or caregivers of children under 14 or individuals with disabilities.
        - MassHealth explained its plans to use existing eligibility records, Social Security Administration data, medical claims, and other available information to automatically identify exemptions or verify compliance whenever possible, reducing the need for members to submit additional documentation.
        - Members subject to work and education requirements will generally move to a six-month renewal cycle. MassHealth emphasized the importance of responding to renewal notices and requests for information to avoid potential coverage loss.
        - The presentation also addressed changes affecting approximately **7,300 immigrants**, including refugees, asylees, parolees, and certain survivors of abuse or trafficking. Some adults may transition from MassHealth Standard to Family Assistance or emergency-only coverage. Family Assistance does not cover certain long-term services and supports or non-emergency medical transportation.

- MassHealth described its outreach and assistance strategy, including partnerships with community-based organizations, healthcare providers, managed care plans, and enrollment assisters to help members navigate renewals, understand exemptions, and connect with employment, education, or volunteer opportunities.
- Members were directed to **Mass.gov/MassHealthMemberChanges** for information, multilingual resources, and a screening tool to help determine whether the new work and education requirements may apply.
- https://www.mass.gov/MassHealthMemberChanges
- https://www.mass.gov/info-details/masshealth-disability-accommodation-ombudsman
- https://www.mass.gov/info-details/get-help-with-federal-changes-affecting-masshealth-members#health-care-for-all-and-community-based-organizations
- https://my.mahealthconnector.org/enrollment-assisters
- Presentation can be accessed here.

- Discussion:
  - Commissioners sought clarification on the percentage of MassHealth members with disabilities and whether they would be subject to the new work and education requirements and six-month renewal process.
    - MassHealth representatives explained that individuals with a disability verified through the Social Security Administration (SSA) or MassHealth's disability evaluation process would be automatically exempt from the work and education requirements and would remain on the 12-month renewal cycle.
    - As of July 2026, approximately **250,000 of MassHealth's nearly 1.9 million members (13%)** had a disability on file.
  - Commissioners raised concerns about the assumption that people with disabilities do not work, emphasizing that many individuals with disabilities are employed and participate in the workforce. While acknowledging the importance of exemptions for those unable to work, he cautioned against reinforcing misconceptions about the employment capabilities of people with disabilities.
    - MassHealth representatives acknowledged his concerns and emphasized the importance of maintaining protections for individuals whose disabilities may prevent them from meeting the requirements.
  - Discussion also addressed individuals experiencing housing instability, including those temporarily staying with others or couch surfing, and whether they could qualify for exemptions under the medical frailty provisions.

        - MassHealth representatives expressed hope that qualifying individuals would be identified for automatic exemptions and highlighted planned outreach through emails, automated phone calls, and text messages to help members understand the changes and available assistance.

4. Subcommittee Reports
    - Disability Employment Subcommittee Report
        - The Subcommittee met on August 31 and heard a presentation from Steve LaMaster, Chair of the Massachusetts State Rehabilitation Council's Business and Employment Subcommittee. The presentation covered the Council's FY27 recommendations, including strengthening employer engagement, expanding self-employment supports, and promoting the Disability Employment Tax Credit.
        - The Subcommittee's next meeting will feature the Riverside Employment Collaborative presenting findings from the FY25 Regional Employment Collaboratives Report.
        - Presentations and minutes can be accessed here.

    - Workforce Supports Subcommittee Report
        - The Subcommittee met on August 31 with representatives from the Human Services Research Institute (HSRI) to review National Core Indicators (NCI) State of the Workforce data, national tracking of Home and Community-Based Services (HCBS) policies, and emerging workforce challenges.
        - The Subcommittee also reported on follow-up efforts related to its May apprenticeship education session and continued exploring opportunities to learn from other states about strategies to address workforce shortages in disability services.
        - Presentations and minutes can be accessed here.

    - LTSS and Health Equity Subcommittee Report
        - The Subcommittee hosted Dr. Jill Pineda, a psychologist at the Lurie Center for Autism, for a presentation on improving healthcare access for individuals with autism and intellectual and developmental disabilities.
        - The presentation and discussion addressed desensitization techniques, trauma-informed care, individualized accommodations, and the importance of preparing patients for medical procedures. Members also discussed gaps in healthcare accommodations for adults with disabilities and opportunities to improve provider training.
        - Presentations and minutes can be accessed here.

5. Executive Director Report

- The Executive Director provided updates on preparations for the October 7 National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM) celebration at the State House, including the afternoon panel on *Artificial Intelligence, Disability, and the Future of Work*. Planning efforts focused on event logistics, accessibility, and coordination with the Planning Committee and State House staff.
- Reported that work had begun on the Commission's FY26 Annual Report, covering activities from July 2025 through June 2026, with publication anticipated later in the fall.
- Shared updates from the Intellectual and Developmental Disability and Autism Alliance Working Group, led by The Arc of Massachusetts, including advocacy related to the federal Department of Justice's *Olmstead* memorandum. Governor Healey joined 17 other governors in signing a statement reaffirming their commitment to home- and community-based services.
- Provided an update from the national State as a Model Employer Community of Practice regarding changes to regulations implementing Section 503 of the Rehabilitation Act, effective September 21, 2026. The changes remove certain requirements for covered federal contractors, including the 7% disability utilization goal, disability self-identification requirements, and certain data collection requirements, while retaining underlying nondiscrimination and affirmative-action obligations.
- Highlighted the Department of Developmental Services' consideration of cameras in shared areas of DDS residential homes for safety and investigative purposes. Listening sessions with self-advocates and individuals receiving DDS services were scheduled for September 17 and 23 to gather feedback on privacy, autonomy, safety, and individual rights.
- Reported recent engagement with state leadership, including a meeting with Acting Undersecretary for Human Services Allison Bovell-Ammon and an upcoming meeting with Secretary Mahaniah.
- Shared upcoming Commission representation at the Human Centric AI Summit, the North of Boston Life & Wellness Expo on September 26, and The Arc of Massachusetts' transition event on October 24, focused on the transition from school to adult services and supports.
- Provided an update on planning for the final *Meeting the Moment* community conversation of 2026, anticipated for November on the South Shore in partnership with MassAbility. Efforts were underway to identify a physically accessible venue with the technology needed for meaningful hybrid participation.

6. Commissioner Announcements
    - Commissioner Rachel Kaprielian shared information about the book *Help Wanted.*
    - Commissioner Craig Hall shared about the upcoming Paul W. Spooner Generational Leadership Summit, scheduled for November 16-18, 2026, at the Marriott Boston Quincy. The Summit honors the legacy of the late Commissioner Paul Spooner and supports emerging disability leaders in

developing leadership and advocacy skills.

7. Adjournment