

MASSACHUSETTS



COMMISSION ON THE STATUS
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

2024 National Disability Employment Awareness Celebration Month



Massachusetts State House | 24 Beacon Street, Boston, MA, 02108

Wednesday, October 23, 2024

Message from the Chair

Dear Friends,

Welcome to the State House! We are honored to have Secretary Lauren Jones of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development with us today and are grateful for the leadership of Governor Maura Healey, Speaker Ron Mariano, and Senate President Karen Spilka in advancing equity and inclusion for individuals with disabilities. As a Commission, we are dedicated to bringing together key stakeholders across the Commonwealth to address critical issues impacting people with disabilities.



Today, we turn our attention to two crucial areas:

- 1) ensuring the right to vote and access to voting for individuals with disabilities, and*
- 2) the essential role of disability-inclusive employment,*
- 3) the critical role of direct support staff and agencies in supporting the work goals of individuals with disabilities.*

I would like to thank our partners and collaborators, whose dedication has empowered the Commission to continue making progress in fostering inclusion and accessibility. We are especially grateful to Undersecretary Josh Cutler of the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development for his continued support, including our partnership with the Department of Economic Research, which has provided critical insights into the labor landscape for individuals with disabilities, as well as a recently extensive analysis of Massachusetts as a State Model Employer and the impact of benefit cliffs on people with disabilities.

We deeply appreciate the Harvard Graduate School of Education students for their research on transitions and post-high school outcomes for youth with disabilities, as well as Patricia Yu from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services for her ongoing commitment to addressing workforce challenges in the healthcare sector.

Today, we are excited to premiere a video featuring exceptional disability-inclusive employers, and we extend our sincere thanks to The Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston, MicroTek, Inc. and Old Colony YMCA, Plymouth Branch for their commitment to creating inclusive environments. We also recognize our 2024 National Disability Employment Awareness Month Employer Award recipients, Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston and Eversource Energy, for their leadership in advancing disability inclusion.

Please look forward to our annual report, to be published later this month, highlighting our work, findings, and recommendations.

Thank you for joining us in our mission to foster an inclusive future where everyone is empowered to work, provide and receive support, and participate fully in the voting process.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Denise Garlick". The signature is fluid and cursive.

*Denise Garlick
Commission Chair
State Representative*

Commission Membership

(continued)

Carl Richardson (Treasurer)
Appointed by the Senate President
Bureau of the State House
ADA Coordinator and 504 Diversity Officer

Lexi Semanchik
Treasurer’s Office Designee
Office of the State Treasurer
HR Marketing and Communications Specialist

Rachel Stanton
Treasurer’s Office Designee
MA Clean Water Trust, Office of the State Treasurer
Investor Relations and Communications Graphic Designer

Meghan Todd
Appointed by the Senate President
City of Framingham
Grants Manager

Christopher White (Vice Chair)
Appointed by the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers, Inc.
Road To Responsibility, Inc. (RTR)
President/CEO

COMMISSIONERS EMERITI

Carla Kath

Nancy Rumbolt-Trzciski

Dan Shannon

Paul W. Spooner

Kerry Thompson

Melinda Troy

Liz Zelnick

WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 23 • 2024 EVENT SCHEDULE

Great Hall Of Flags, Massachusetts State House • 12:30PM To 2PM

NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH: CHAMPIONING INCLUSION

EMCEE Representative Denise Garlick, Commission Chair

OPENING REMARKS

Representative Denise Garlick, Commission Chair

Lieutenant Governor Kim Driscoll

KEYNOTE

Secretary Lauren Jones, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development

2024 LEGISLATIVE CHAMPIONS AWARD RECIPIENTS

Craig Hall, Commission Member Presenting:

Senator Michael Barrett

Massachusetts Senate, Senate President Karen Spilka

Representative John Lawn

Massachusetts House of Representatives, Speaker Ron Mariano

SPOTLIGHT: Disability Inclusive Workplaces Employers and Employees Perspectives

2024 NATIONAL DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH EMPLOYER RECIPIENTS

Kathy Petkauskos, Commission Disability Employment Chair Presenting:

Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston Small to Mid-Size Organization Award Recipient

Remarks from:

Barry Gale, Senior Vice President / Chief Human Resources Officer, OMWI Director;

Adam Coldwell, Vice President, Director of Marketing and Communications

Eversource Energy, Large Size Organization Award Recipient

Remarks from:

Don Scacco, Vice President of Connecticut Electric Operations,

Executive Sponsor of the AdaptAbility Business Resource Groups;

Tim Vernon, Senior Customer Service Representative and co-lead for the AdaptAbility Business Resource Groups

2024 EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT CHAMPION AWARD RECIPIENT

Regina Marshall, Commission Member Presenting:

Employment Supports Award Recipient

Remarks from Amanda Strange, Employment Specialist, CHAI Day and Employment Services,

Jewish Family & Children's Service

SPOTLIGHT:

Inclusive Democracy: Insights on Voting Access and Civic Engagement for People with Disabilities

Remarks from:

Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts William Francis Galvin

Raquel Quezada, Chair; Cody Rooney, Vice Chair Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council,

Leo Sarkissian, Executive Director, The Arc of Massachusetts

CLOSING REMARKS

Executive Board Members: Representative Denise Garlick, Oswald Mondejar,

Carl Richardson and Chris White

A horizontal decorative line consisting of small orange dots.

Secretary of Labor and Workforce Development

**VOTING RIGHTS PANEL DISCUSSION:
ACCESSIBLE DEMOCRACY, EVERY VOTE COUNTS
11AM TO 12PM, ROOM 428, 4TH FLOOR**

MASSACHUSETTS



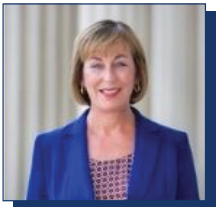
COMMISSION ON THE STATUS
OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES

WEDNESDAY OCTOBER 23, 2024 • PANELISTS



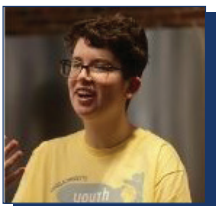
Maura Sullivan is the incoming Chief Executive Officer for The Arc of Massachusetts. She will take on this role in November 2024. Maura has been leading Government Affairs for The Arc for a decade. She is also the Director of Operation House Call, a nationally recognized training program and partnership between The Arc and all major Massachusetts Medical Schools.

Maura's Government Affairs work includes leading the advocacy for the passage of several significant legislative achievements, and she has been instrumental in securing increased funding for the Department of Developmental Services (DDS) budget, the direct support workforce, and MassHealth. In addition, Maura directs the policy and advocacy of Advocates for Autism of Massachusetts. A former LEND Fellow, Maura holds a master's degree in public administration from Suffolk University. She is also a devoted mother of three, including two transition-age sons who have autism and intellectual disabilities.



Barbara L'Italien, Executive Director from the Disability Law Center. She has been a leading advocate at the intersection between politics, law, health care and policy for twenty-five years. She has served as both a State Representative and State Senator in the Massachusetts Legislature, focusing on the rights and needs of people with disabilities, seniors, people who are economically disadvantaged and the LGBTQ community.

Her advocacy concerning Autism built the service delivery system for educational, social-emotional, and medical support and included establishing and chairing the first Autism Commission and passing comprehensive mandated medical insurance coverage. Barbara gave up her State Senate seat to run for Congress in 2018. She has been a Government Affairs Director for the Massachusetts State Treasurer, The Arc of Massachusetts and Partners in Health. She has served as the Executive Director of the Disability Law Center for the past two years with a focus on systemic policy and legislative advocacy.



Olivia Thompson, Partners for Youth with Disabilities Participant. She is a 25-year-old living in Boxboro Massachusetts. She is a college graduate with a degree in Media Production. Currently, she is finishing up an Artists + Repertoire internship where she found up and coming Los Angeles musicians to be featured in a showcase. She previously was a peer leader for Partners for Youth with Disabilities' Youth Leadership Forum. She has been a part of multiple panels. Her hobbies include playing sports and listening to music. She believes voting is a right for all and wants to start fighting for what matters to her.



Bridget Simmons Murphy is a Project Manager in the Elections Division in the office of Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin. She graduated from Stonehill College and also studied at University College Dublin in Dublin, Ireland. Bridget began her career working for the Fine Gael Political Party in Dublin, Ireland. She has since worked in development for The American Ireland Fund, Partners Healthcare, and also as a consultant to several statewide, city, and local political campaigns in Massachusetts.

In January 2006 Bridget joined Secretary of the Commonwealth William Francis Galvin's office with the primary focus to ensure the voting process is accessible to all voters in Massachusetts by providing training to local election officials, surveying polling locations, providing assistance with all aspects of the accessible voting units, and working on the Accessible Vote by Mail team.

Scan Here for More Information



**VOTING RIGHTS PANEL DISCUSSION:
ACCESSIBLE DEMOCRACY, EVERY VOTE COUNTS
11AM TO 12PM, ROOM 428, 4TH FLOOR**

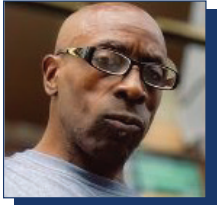
MASSACHUSETTS



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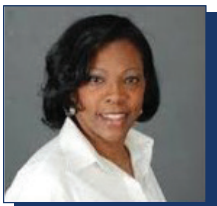
This dynamic panel features self-advocates sharing their personal experiences with voting, along with insights from the Secretary of State of Massachusetts and other key stakeholders working to make voting accessible for everyone.



Keith Jones is the President and CEO of SoulTouchin' Experiences LLC. It is an organization aimed at bringing a perspective to the issues of access inclusion and empowerment, which affect him as well as others who are persons with and without disabilities.

To achieve this multicultural, cross-disability education and outreach efforts he collaborates and conducts trainings with the purpose of strengthening efforts to provide services and information for people with disabilities. The issues he tackles are wide ranging from immigration, criminal justice reform, health care and environmental justice just to name a few.

Paralleling with his policy and social justice work Mr. Jones is a multitalented artist who along with Leroy Moore and Rob Temple founded Krip Hop Nation which is an international collection of artists with disabilities. Krip Hop Nation is currently celebrating 14 years with the recent Emmy Award winning success of their title song for the Netflix documentary of the Paralympic Games, Rising Phoenix and its critical acclaimed sound track.



Regina Marshall is the Chief Operating Officer and Executive Vice President of Advocates; a provider of services to individuals facing life challenges. In her role, she is responsible for daily operations and oversight of Community Services and Administrative Operations. She joined Advocates in 2015 with the goal of shaping policy and making systemic change in order to help Advocates provide the best possible services to the people it supports. Since then, she has built a diverse team of operation leaders committed to Advocates' mission and values. Regina brings to her position at Advocates a broad range of experience as a legal advocate and administrator at both the executive and operational levels of state government.

During her tenure at the Massachusetts Executive Office of Health and Human Services, she oversaw disability agencies that include the Department of Developmental Services, Massachusetts Commission for the Blind, Massachusetts Rehabilitation Commission, and the Massachusetts Commission for the Deaf and Hard of Hearing. Regina also served as Center Director of the Massachusetts Mental Health Center, which serves over 1,200 clients, where she was responsible for all clinical and administrative operations. In 2020, Regina joined the board of trustees at Bethany Hill Place. A resident of Framingham, Regina holds a bachelor's degree in political science and African American studies from Simmons College and a law degree from Northeastern University. She is the proud mom of three - twin daughters and a son. In the rare free time she gets between working and parenting, Regina loves to cook and bake.

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INCLUSION IN ACTION: BRIDGING GAPS IN DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT FIRESIDE CHAT

2:30PM TO 3:30PM, SENATE READING ROOM 3RD FLOOR

MASSACHUSETTS



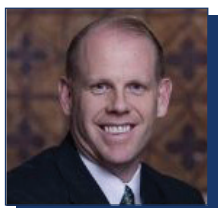
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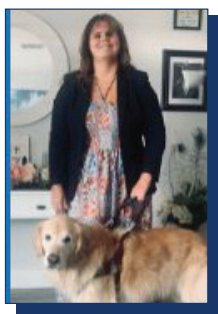


Greg Martin is the Chief Information Officer for the Commonwealth of Massachusetts Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs. Greg's large IT team is responsible for all technology investments and operations for EOEEA and its agencies, including the Departments of Conservation & Recreation, Energy Resources, Agricultural Resources, Fish and Game, Public Utilities, and Environmental Protection, plus the Massachusetts Environmental Police and offices managing environmental policy, water resources & infrastructure, toxics use, coastal zones, and more.

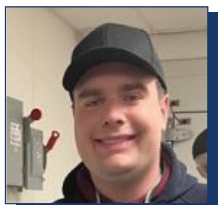
Greg's 18-year career with the Commonwealth also includes extensive work at the Executive Office of Health and Human Services where he managed EOHHS's voice and data networks, enterprise mobility, collaboration technologies, server projects, e-discovery, and a variety of other operations and infrastructure technologies. As a former Captain in the United States Air Force, Greg learned to lead, collaborate, and manage multifunctional teams and projects in locations all around the world.



Mark Feinour, Senior Vice President, Support Services Executive from Bank of America. Reporting within Global Human Resources, Support Services employs over 300 associates with intellectual challenges who provide data entry, printing services, fulfillment, and kitting/assembly functions to support Bank of America businesses with cost-effective and quality service. Mr. Feinour began his career at Bank of America in 1992, and worked in a number of roles before moving to the Support Services division in 1999. Within Support Services, Mark acted as the Administration Manager, and later developed, created, and managed the Inventory Management department. In early 2005, Mark was named the Business Support Executive for the group, taking on responsibilities of managing all aspects of the division including developing innovative ways for associates to achieve their potential and promoting the group internally as a valued resource for services.



Sarah Wiles, who is blind, has been a Client Assistance Program (CAP) Advocate at the Massachusetts Office on Disability (MOD) since July of 2020. During her time at MOD, she completed her law degree at Western New England University. As a CAP Advocate Sarah provides information and advocacy to individuals applying for and receiving Vocational Rehabilitation (VR) and Independent Living (IL) services in Massachusetts. As part of this role she provides technical guidance to individuals with disabilities about their employment rights. Sarah lives in Boston with her 8 year old golden retriever Atlas, her Seeing Eye dog and birthday twin (Sarah and Atlas celebrated their birthday on 10/1).



David McGrath has been a part time Food Service Assistant at Spaulding Rehabilitation Hospital for almost 2 years. David has been trained on several positions in the kitchen but has been most successful at pot washing. David is ServSafe certified and has a goal of becoming a cook one day. In David's free time, he practices karate and is currently a first-degree brown belt. David also enjoys hanging out with his friends and social group when he's not at work. In September 2023, David rescued his kitty, Willow, and is a proud cat Dad!

Scan Here for More Information



INCLUSION IN ACTION: BRIDGING GAPS IN DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT FIRESIDE CHAT

2:30PM TO 3:30PM, SENATE READING ROOM 3RD FLOOR

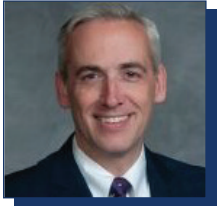
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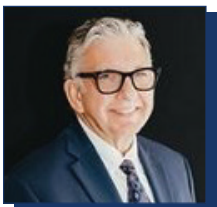
Hear from industry leaders who've successfully recruited and retained individuals with disabilities, as well as self-advocates who will share their personal journeys to professional success.



Undersecretary Josh Cutler, Apprenticeship, Work-Based Learning, and Policy, Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. He served six terms in the state legislature and is the former House Chair of the Labor and Workforce Development Committee. He also co-chaired the Future of Work Commission, the Coastal Caucus and the WorkAbility Subcommittee on disability employment. In the House, Cutler was a champion for workforce development, vocational education, and career center funding. He was lead sponsor of the wage transparency act, disability hiring tax credit, and apprenticeship standards and re-entry works legislation. Cutler was a recipient of the Thomas M. Menino Public Service Award for his work on disability employment policy. He has also been recognized as Legislator of the Year by the Mass. Developmental Disabilities Council, the Association of Developmental Disabilities Providers, the Mass. Mental Health Counselors Association, and the Plymouth-Bristol Central Labor Council. Cutler holds a Master's in Public Policy from the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth, and a Juris Doctor from Suffolk Law School. He is an attorney and the author of two books on local history.



Representative Kip Diggs, Vice-Chair, Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce, Massachusetts House of Representatives, since January 2021, representing the 2nd Barnstable District, which includes his hometown of Osterville on Cape Cod. Representative Kip Diggs is the Vice-Chair on the Joint Committee for Labor and Workforce Development. Before entering politics, Diggs was a successful professional boxer with a record of 30 wins, 5 losses, and 3 knockouts, earning him the North American Boxing Federation and International Boxing Organization welterweight titles. Following the tragic loss of his son and the overwhelming support from his community, Diggs was encouraged to run for public office. He won the primary as a write-in candidate during the COVID-19 lockdown and defeated an incumbent in the general election. As a state representative, Diggs focuses on reducing housing barriers, promoting employee ownership, and bolstering the workforce, remaining a steadfast advocate for his community on Beacon Hill.



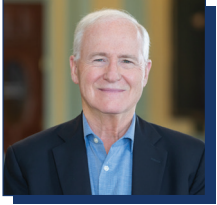
Oswald Mondejar, Executive Board Member, Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities. He is a Mission Driven Consultant who works at the intersection of policy, advocacy and community and government relations. His engagements include human centered universal designs for accessibility, diversity recruitment, human resources, and leading DE&I initiatives for several organizations. Before becoming a trusted advisor to leaders in business, government and nonprofit sectors as Mucho Gusto In's President and Lead Consultant, Oz most recently served as Senior Vice President of Mission and Advocacy for Spaulding Rehabilitation Network (SN), the post-acute care services division of Mass General Brigham. His responsibilities included mission integration and administrative operations across Organizational Development and Community Relations, including Adaptive Sports. Oz led SRN's Equity, Dignity and Respect (EDR). He also oversaw Human Resources, Marketing, and Communications. Prior to joining Mass General Brigham in 2001, Oz led the Social Security Administration's New England Region's diversity recruitment and retention initiatives and worked as a Human Resources Executive in several different industries including manufacturing, hospitality, and finance. Internationally recognized for his expertise on accessibility, disability rights and workplace accommodations, Oz serves on several boards and is an advisor to others.

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2024 LEGISLATIVE CHAMPIONS AWARD RECIPIENTS

The Commission is pleased to recognize Senator Barrett and Representative Lawn as the 2024 Legislative Champions Award recipients. This award honors their efforts in sponsoring and co-sponsoring disability-related legislation and their focus on disability issues in their legislative priorities. Both have played important roles in advocating for the disability community through their involvement in relevant committees. We appreciate their ongoing commitment to creating a more inclusive future.



"Despite the progress, the particulars of the workplace can be tough for anyone, and one's disability often leaves a person at an additional disadvantage. Your employers and your coworkers can believe that they're behaving well, but bias and discrimination are insidious. The result, whether intended or not, can add considerable stress to the day-to-day of holding down a job. We have to stay vigilant and we have to be insistent on receiving reasonable accommodations."

Senator Michael Barrett

Massachusetts Senate, Senate President Karen Spilka

Mike Barrett is the State Senator for Bedford, Carlisle, Chelmsford, Concord, Lincoln, Waltham, Weston, and large parts of Lexington. He serves as Assistant Majority Leader in the State Senate and as Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities, and Energy.

Mike previously served as Senate Chair of the Joint Committee on Children, Families, and Persons with Disabilities. During the state budget process, he has successfully worked to boost funding for the Disabled Persons Protection Commission.

In 2022, Mike led the effort to create the Special Commission on State Institutions, which is tasked with studying and reporting on the history of state institutions for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities in Massachusetts. The Commission will publish its findings in 2025.



"Under the leadership of Speaker Mariano, the House continues to uplift folks with disabilities, because we recognize the talent and value that they add to Massachusetts' and America's workplaces and economy. The House will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that people with disabilities can access good jobs every month of the year, not only during National Disability Employment Awareness Month."

Representative John Lawn

Massachusetts House of Representatives, Speaker Ron Mariano

Born and raised in Watertown, State Representative John Lawn graduated from Merrimack College in 1991. He has represented the 10th Middlesex District—which includes parts of Watertown, Waltham, and Newton—since 2011, and he currently serves as House Chair of the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing. Chair Lawn humbly carries on his family's deep commitment to health care. His mother—who came to Boston from Ireland in the early 1960's—his wife, and, most recently, his daughter are all nurses in the Boston area. Rep. Lawn's legislative achievements include campaign finance reform, veterans legislation, and statute of limitation reform. He lives in Watertown with his wife Shannon and five children.

2024 SMALL TO MID-SIZE ORGANIZATION HONOREE



Investing in Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion
Driving Results



The mission of the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston is to provide highly reliable wholesale funding and liquidity to our member financial institutions in New England. We strive to deliver the best financial products, services, and expertise that support home financing, affordable housing, and community development, including programs targeted to lower-income households.

By increasing the value of membership and enhancing the products and programs we offer, we ensure that our members can continue to provide the financing the customers and communities they serve need. Over the years, we've developed job creation and homeownership assistance programs, as well as advance products to meet member needs.

"Businesses must be willing to change if they want employees to be able to give their best. We can't just sit around waiting on employees to tell us they need something. We have to be proactive. We don't navigate the world in the same ways, and not everyone can control how they take in information. We need to learn about these differences so we can provide the necessary tools and resources. That's what inclusivity does — it brings everyone into the conversation, so we can all improve together." -Bukky Olugbemi, Diversity Equity & Inclusion Specialist at FHLBank Boston

As part of Disability Pride Month, FHLBank Boston, employees were able to experience what it's like for people with disabilities to navigate digital experiences using various technology tools through an Empathy Lab, which was organized by the Bank's Inclusion Council. Demonstrations were led by staff from Perkins Access, a division of the Perkins School for the Blind.

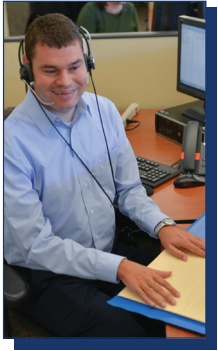


2024 LARGE SIZE ORGANIZATION HONOREE:



At Eversource, we believe in creating a workplace that reflects our values of inclusivity, collaboration, and innovation. The communities we serve are diverse, and we aim to hire, develop and retain a workforce that mirrors that diversity – a team with different backgrounds and perspectives committed to delivering great service to our customers.

We are committed to providing opportunities for professional and personal growth through our seven employee-led business resource groups (BRGs). In 2024, we launched the AdaptAbility BRG focused on creating and maintaining a safe, inclusive, and equitable environment for employees with disabilities and caregivers.



Tim Vernon is a Senior Customer Service Representative and Co-Lead for the AdaptAbility BRG

"Prior to receiving a job offer from Eversource, I went on over 70 interviews, but other companies were reluctant to hire someone who was blind. Eversource executives looked beyond blindness, and collaborated with me and other stakeholders in the blindness community to ensure I had the tools for success."

- Tim Vernon is a Senior Customer Service Representative and Co-Lead for the AdaptAbility BRG



Don Scacco, Vice President of Connecticut Electric Operations, Executive Sponsor of the AdaptAbility BRG

"We are dedicated to working with our employees with disabilities and caregivers to better understand where they're coming from and support where they're going. As we continue on this journey, we are committed to finding new ways to further disability inclusion and create a sense of belonging for all."

- Don Scacco, Vice President of Connecticut Electric Operations, Executive Sponsor of the AdaptAbility BRG

DISABILITY INCLUSIVE WORKPLACE: EMPLOYER AND EMPLOYEE PERSPECTIVES

Experience the “Disability Inclusive Workplaces: Employers and Employees Perspectives” feature, where organizations from different industries share their experiences in cultivating inclusive environments. We are grateful to MicroTek, Inc., Old Colony YMCA, Plymouth Branch and the Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston for their leadership in demonstrating how inclusive practices create meaningful benefits for everyone.

To learn more, visit the Creating Disability-Inclusive Workplaces webpage on the Commission’s website by going to www.mass.gov/InclusiveWorkplaceGuide or scanning the QR code. You’ll discover essential resources like training opportunities, best practices, and financial incentives that support the hiring and retention of employees with disabilities. Whether you’re just starting or looking to strengthen your existing efforts, this resource offers the tools you need to build a more inclusive and empowering workplace for all.

Andy Ferris

Teacher Assistant and Camp Counselor
Old Colony YMCA, Plymouth Branch



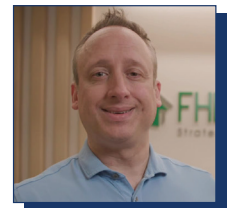
Jonathan Bolstridge

Assembler
MicroTek, Inc.,



Adam Coldwell

Vice President,
Director of Marketing and Communications
Federal Home Loan Bank of Boston.



Contact Us: CSPWDINFO@MASS.GOV

THANK YOU TO THE FOLLOWING ORGANIZATIONS WHO PARTICIPATED IN THE 2024 EMPLOYER NOMINATION FORM

The Permanent Commission on the Status of Persons with Disabilities sincerely thanks all the organizations that participated in this year's Employer Nomination Form in honor of National Disability Employment Awareness Month. We deeply appreciate your dedication to building and maintaining inclusive work environments that embrace and support individuals with disabilities. Your efforts in promoting disability inclusion and equity are truly inspiring, and we are excited to recognize the work you've done to make a positive impact. Your commitment is essential to driving meaningful progress across the Commonwealth.



Food Service Assistants and Kitchen Director at work in the kitchen at the Spaulding Charlestown location



**MUSIC MAKES ME
HAPPY Chorus**

We'd also like to acknowledge that the questions in the nomination form were inspired by the Disability Equality Index from Disability:IN, whose framework has guided our efforts in advancing workplace inclusivity.

Disability: IN is a global nonprofit driving disability inclusion and equality in business. Through programs like the Disability Equality Index, Disability empowers companies to advance inclusive practices, foster leadership opportunities, and support disability-owned businesses. Their initiatives help businesses create accessible workplaces and cultivate a culture of inclusion. Learn more by visiting <https://disabilityin.org>

THE COMMISSION IS PROUD TO CONTINUE OUR PARTNERSHIP WITH



FOR OUR CATERING AND PRINTING NEEDS.

CWS supports individuals facing employment barriers by providing innovative job training, placement, and support services, helping them achieve self-sufficiency. You can learn more about CWS at cwsnewengland.org.

Lane Printing and Advertising, a family-owned and woman-owned certified small business, is a registered manufacturer in Massachusetts. As a certified state contractor, Lane Printing offers services including printing, copying, mailing, promotional items, apparel, signage, and event planning. They hold statewide contracts accessible to agencies, municipalities, and nonprofits. You can learn more about Lane Printing at <https://laneprint.com/>.



Chef Rocco and Staff from CWS am with MDDC, Deputy Director Jennifer Haaker Bertrand

2024 EMPLOYMENT SUPPORTS AWARD RECIPIENT

"As an Employment Specialist, I'm eager to support individuals with disabilities in establishing a career path that not only promotes independence and connection but feeds their passion as well. I'm grateful to work for an agency that fosters the creativity required to do so!" - Amanda Strange, Employment Support Champion



Amanda graduated from Bridgewater State University with a Bachelor's in Social Work, and Recreation minor. For the past seven years, Amanda has found both passion and purpose through her work with Jewish Family & Children's Service, JF&CS. Prior to her work as a Certified Employment Support Professional, Amanda held several different positions within the Human Service field, such as, individual and family therapeutic intervention specialist, inclusive teambuilding instructor, and program counselor and coordinator for groups with disabilities. In her free time, Amanda loves exploring outdoors, or catching some live music, with her husband, son, and two dogs.



Elizabeth Martin, Classroom Assistant for an Afterschool Program.

INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY: INSIGHTS ON VOTING ACCESS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES



"The history of Massachusetts is the history of America. And that is true, and truer today than ever before." - Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts William Francis Galvin

As the Commonwealth's Chief Elections Official, Secretary Galvin has a proven record of running, fair, accurate, and secure elections. Secretary Galvin has been a supporter of Election Day registration and has been a strong advocate for the passage of the Votes Act, which made "no excuse" Vote by Mail permanent in Massachusetts.

As Census liaison, Secretary Galvin oversaw complete and accurate counts in 2000, 2010, and 2020 ensuring that Massachusetts is fully represented in Washington and gets its fair share of federal funding. With the latest Census count in 2020, Secretary Galvin's efforts to mobilize communities around counting efforts allowed for Massachusetts to have a record-breaking population count with a particular focus on ensuring immigrant communities and persons of color were accurately accounted for. These efforts allowed Massachusetts to retain all its Congressional seats.

Secretary Galvin also serves as the chief securities regulator in Massachusetts. In this role, he has worked tirelessly to protect Massachusetts investors and the integrity of the financial markets. He has pursued some of the largest financial firms in the country, recovering millions on behalf of Massachusetts citizens who have fallen victim to financial fraud. He has routinely stood up for the most vulnerable investors and savers by pursuing enforcement actions against rogue brokers and dishonest and unethical firms as well as ensuring proper licensing and registration of securities firms, professionals, and products.



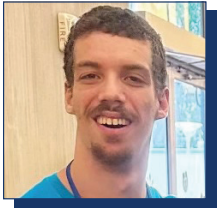
"The right to vote is a fundamental right that must be accessible to all American citizens, including people with disabilities. Every voice strengthens our democracy and celebrates our diversity." - Raquel Quezada, Chair, Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council

[Raquel Quezada](#) is from the Dominican Republic and is the mother of four children – one of whom is medically complex and has Cerebral Palsy, and two with ADHD, just like herself. She is an avid advocate in the Latino community, but also for all Massachusetts families and wherever else her support is needed. Previously, Quezada was a Boston Children's Hospital LEND program fellow from 2017-18, an Allen C. Crocker fellow from 2018-19, and a student studying Psychology. She is experienced in Communications, Radio, and TV Production in her home country of the Dominican Republic and has authored 9 books.

Equipped with the knowledge, compassion, and care of a mother of a child with a disability and with education on different types of disabilities and situations, Quezada created and began hosting the local radio and TV program "Cambiando El Mundo de Personas con Discapacidades" (Changing the World of People with Disabilities.) Quezada's overall mission is to educate, inform, and share knowledge on what information and resources are available for people with special needs, and provide a place where other families can come and share their experiences.

In her show, Quezada talks about all topics that can help disability communities. Different organizations, public and private businesses, and companies are brought on to share information about different programs and to showcase any products or technology that can benefit people with special needs.

INCLUSIVE DEMOCRACY: INSIGHTS ON VOTING ACCESS AND CIVIC ENGAGEMENT FOR PEOPLE WITH DISABILITIES (continued)



"Voters with disabilities require different accommodations because we are all different. Laws like the American with Disabilities Act and the Help America Vote Act protect the rights of citizens with disabilities to vote in private. I have cerebral palsy and need a scribe to mark a physical ballot so accessible polling places with working voting machines upholds my right to vote in private. Sadly, privacy in voting as a person with a disability is highly dependent on where you live."

- Cody Rooney, Vice-Chair, Massachusetts Developmental Disabilities Council

Cody Rooney is from Amherst, MA and is currently studying Political Science at UMass Amherst. He previously attended Holyoke Community College, where he graduated with a degree in Human Services. He was born with Cerebral Palsy and his family was told he would never walk or talk. Well, he does both now!

Cody has a passion for leadership and doing the work for a better tomorrow. He has worked with Partners for Youth with Disabilities as a fellow for the summer program "Young Leaders Rising" and as a peer leader for the Youth Leadership Forum.

Cody served as student Vice President at Holyoke Community College and also served on the Teach Disability Committee. He is also a changemaker with New Deal for Youth where they work hard for a better tomorrow. Cody is also very involved with his Native American culture. He enjoys traveling, Boston sports teams, and going to the beach.



"Although the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA) contained provisions advancing the rights of citizens with disabilities to vote, we didn't see any significant rise in voter turnout among this population until the late 1980s."

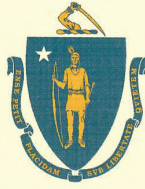
- Leo Sarkissian, Executive Director, The Arc of Massachusetts

Leo Sarkissian has served as an advocate for people with intellectual and developmental disabilities (IDD) and their right to an equitable, dignified life for more than five decades of which 33 years have been as CEO of The Arc of Massachusetts. He has worked nationally as well on Medicaid, Home and Community Based Services, deinstitutionalization and reducing waiting lists for services. During Leo's tenure, The Arc has:

- Strengthened the alliance the 17 chapters IN Massachusetts, supporting them and other agencies in advancing outstanding services to people with disabilities
- Significantly advancing public policy that have resulted in allocation of hundreds of millions of dollars in additional funding for important services and supports, including three Massachusetts' class actions in the 1990s
- Working with legislative champions and grassroots coalitions, advanced legislation such as Autism Omnibus, Real Lives, National Background Check, Nicky's Law, and Operation House Call;

Leo Sarkissian has an unwavering commitment to equity, diversity and human rights. He is married, and he has two adult daughters and four grandsons.

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts



A Proclamation

Whereas, October 2024 marks the 79th anniversary of National Disability Employment Awareness Month (NDEAM); and

Whereas, NDEAM serves to educate the public about disability employment issues and to celebrate the diverse contributions of America's workers with disabilities; and

Whereas, NDEAM originated in 1945 as a week-long event focused solely on individuals with physical disabilities, evolving over time to a month-long observance that now acknowledges the importance of workforce inclusion for people of all disabilities; and

Whereas, Workplaces that embrace the talents of all individuals, including those with disabilities, are essential to fostering an inclusive community and a robust economy; and

Whereas, The activities during this month highlight the valuable contributions of people with disabilities to our workplaces and communities, reinforcing Massachusetts' commitment to enhancing access and equity for all; and

Whereas, Despite progress, people with disabilities in Massachusetts continue to face significant disparities in income and employment outcomes, with median earnings in 2022 reported at \$33,465—substantially lower than those without disabilities—underscoring the need for ongoing efforts to improve workforce inclusivity; and

Whereas, Massachusetts calls upon employers, schools and community organizations to observe October with appropriate programs and activities, advancing the critical message that individuals with disabilities contribute invaluable talent and skill to our workplaces and communities; and

Whereas, Massachusetts pledges to continue its efforts throughout the year to recruit, hire, retain and advance individuals with disabilities, striving to achieve the goals of opportunity, full participation, economic self-sufficiency and independent living for all people with disabilities,

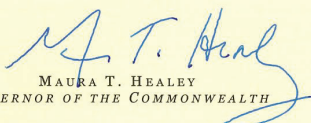
Now, Therefore, I, Maura T. Healey, Governor of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, do hereby proclaim October 2024, to be,

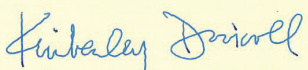
DISABILITY EMPLOYMENT AWARENESS MONTH


And urge all residents of the Commonwealth to take cognizance of this event and participate fittingly in its observance.

Given at the Executive Chamber in Boston, this first day of October, in the year two thousand and twenty-four, and of the Independence of the United States of America, the two hundred and forty-eighth.

BY HER EXCELLENCY


MAURA T. HEALEY
GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH


KIMBERLEY DRISCOLL
LT. GOVERNOR OF THE COMMONWEALTH


WILLIAM FRANCIS GALVIN
SECRETARY OF THE COMMONWEALTH

God Save the Commonwealth of Massachusetts

THE COMMISSION'S VALUES STATEMENTS

- 1) Disability is a natural part of the human experience that in no way diminishes one's right to fully participate in all aspects of community life across their lifespan.
 - a) As such, state disability policy shall support the following five goals:
 - i) Equitable access to opportunities that contribute to physical and social wellness including inclusive, integrated and adaptive physical activity, sport, recreation and entertainment.
 - ii) Equal opportunity, including treating people with disabilities as individuals, making assessments based on facts, objective evidence and science, and providing effective and meaningful experiences in the most integrated setting appropriate.
 - iii) Full participation in society, including engagement of people with disabilities in relevant decision-making at the individual and systems levels, self-determination, self-advocacy and informed choice.
 - iv) Economic self-sufficiency, including employment-related services and supports, financial literacy, entrepreneurship and work incentives.
 - v) Independent living, including skills development and long-term services and supports.
- 2) Disability can develop at any point during an individual's lifetime and have varying impacts.
 - a) As such, state agencies should ensure service delivery is relevant at all ages, is inclusive of all types of disabilities, and maximizes the strengths and abilities of the individual.
 - b) The Commonwealth of Massachusetts shall provide a centralized systems navigation process so that people with disabilities and their families have a place to ask questions and get answers about rights, responsibilities, services and supports.
- 3) Successful disability policy embraces the "nothing about us without us" principle.
 - a) Individuals with disabilities, as well as families and allies, should be engaged throughout the policymaking process at all levels. This includes increasing the actual participation of people with disabilities at all levels of state government.
- 4) People with disabilities have valuable and unique strengths and contributions yet they are underutilized in our workforce and frequently experience social and economic disadvantage.
 - a) People with disabilities contribute to the rich diversity of our Commonwealth and should be included in all diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts in public policy and among private enterprise.
- 5) Employers should make efforts to hire people with disabilities because the workplace is enriched through increased innovation, creativity, and productivity by persons with disabilities.
 - a) State disability employment initiatives should encourage public and private employers of all sizes and industries to adopt and promote a value proposition to include individuals with disabilities in their organizations as employees, customers, and suppliers.

Adapted from Work Matters: A Framework for States on Workforce Development for People with Disabilities, published in 2017 by the Council of State Governments (CGS) and the National Conference of State Legislatures (NCSL).

Scan the QR code below to visit the Commission's website and subscribe for the latest updates.

