

# Special Commission on State Institutions

March 13<sup>th</sup>, 2025

3:00PM – 5:00PM

Virtual / Zoom

Kate Benson

Co-chair

# Agenda

1. Welcome and Announcements
2. Recap of Last Meeting
3. Vote to Approve 02/13/25 Meeting Minutes
4. SCSI Roles-Vice Chair
5. Upcoming Meetings of the SCSI
6. Proposed Recommendations for the Framework for Remembrance
7. Next Steps
8. Vote to Adjourn

# Welcome and Announcements

- ▶ Introductions and Goodbyes:
  - ▶ Welcome Camille Karabaich, Mass Office on Disability
  - ▶ Thank you, Matt Millett, former co-chair of the SCSI
- ▶ Recap of Last Meeting
- ▶ Vote to approve 02/13/25 meeting minutes

# Commission Roles-Vice Chair

- ▶ Approved by vote in November SCSI Meeting
- ▶ The vice chair would be responsible for:
  - ▶ Coordinating regularly with the co-Chairs
  - ▶ Chairing meetings in the absence of one of the co-Chairs
  - ▶ Acting as Chair when requested to do so by one of the co-Chairs
  - ▶ Assisting with tasks as requested

# Upcoming Meetings

- ▶ Open Meeting Law-Temporary rules to allow virtual meetings set to expire on 3/31/25
- ▶ Meeting scheduled for April 10, 2025 –Will we have enough members to meet?

# Framework for Remembrance

## Proposed Recommendations

# Framework for Remembrance- Recommendation #1

- ▶ Disability History Museum
  - ▶ Preserve the history of residents of state institutions
  - ▶ Document the history of the independent living movement, deinstitutionalization and the inclusion of people with disabilities.
  - ▶ Serve as a hub of information with links to resources for former patients/families seeking their records
  - ▶ Physical or Digital space

# Discussion

## Disability History Museum



# Framework for Remembrance- Recommendation #2

- ▶ Perpetual Care Fund
  - ▶ Establish a fund to provide financial resources for the long-term maintenance of institutional cemeteries, including tasks like landscaping, road upkeep, and general grounds care.
  - ▶ Award grants to support community groups to create memorials at locations where former patients and residents of MA institutions are buried.

# Discussion

## Perpetual Care Fund

# Framework for Remembrance- Recommendation #3

- ▶ Establish a Statewide Day of Remembrance
  - ▶ Hold Remembrance Day ceremonies to honor those individuals who lived in MA State Institutions and recognize them as critical pieces of Massachusetts history
  - ▶ Serve as an opportunity to reflect upon the strides made in reducing the stigma of disability, including psychiatric and developmental disabilities, as well as promoting community awareness and education
- ▶ Request a Proclamation from Gov Healey

# Discussion

## Day of Remembrance Proclamation

# Framework for Remembrance- Recommendation #4

- ▶ Request the state of MA issue a formal apology for:
  - ▶ the neglect of some of the state institutional cemeteries
  - ▶ some of the ways that state institutions hurt, rather than helped people
- ▶ Educate the public on the history of state institutions for the disabled in Massachusetts

# Example-Georgia Dept of Mental Health

- ▶ Speech made by Dr. Thomas Hester in August 2000
- ▶ Psychiatrist and the Medical Director for the Georgia Department of Mental Health.
  - ▶ Addressed a conference of 1,000 mental health consumers, survivors, and ex-patients.
  - ▶ Made a formal apology for the neglect of cemeteries at Central State Hospital where as many as 30,000 former patients may be buried
  - ▶ Apologized for the ways in which state institutions sometimes harmed people instead of helping them.
  - ▶ Shared a plan for how things would improve moving forward.

# Example-The State of Minnesota

- ▶ In 2009, the Minnesota Legislature passed a resolution offering an official apology to Minnesotans with disabilities, those with mental illness, and their families.
- ▶ The apology addressed the harm caused by institutionalization in Minnesota, dating back to the 1800s.
- ▶ The resolution was signed by the Governor.
- ▶ The apology was the result of decades of work by activists focused on:
  - ▶ Closing institutions
  - ▶ Creating more community and family living options for people with disabilities and mental illness
  - ▶ Honoring those who lived and died in Minnesota's institutions
  - ▶ Acknowledging a painful chapter in the state's history.

# Discussion

## Formal Apology



# Other Recommendations?

► What else should we consider?

# Next Steps

► Vote to Adjourn