## Special Commission on State Institutions

**March 13th, 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 grands 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

