

Special Commission on State Institutions

September 6, 2023

2:30 - 4:30 pm

Virtual / Zoom

Evelyn Mateo

Co-chair

Matt Millett

Co-chair



Agenda



- 1. Welcome**
- 2. Vote to Approve the 6/1/2023 Meeting Minutes**
- 3. Review of Open Meeting Law**
- 4. Hiring Subcommittee Update**
- 5. Commission Structure and Frequency of Meetings**
- 6. Review of Next Steps**



Review of Open Meeting Law



Carrie Benedon

Assistant Attorney General
Director, Division of Open Government
Massachusetts Office of the Attorney General

Lauren Cleary

Associate General Counsel
Executive Office of Health and Human Services



Hiring Subcommittee Update



Members who volunteered during 6/1 Commission meeting:

- Michael Comeau (later replaced by John Hannigan)
- Andrew Levrault
- Mary Mahon McCauley
- Vesper Moore

Advisors:

- Alex Green
- Victor Hernandez
- Evelyn Mateo
- Matt Millett



Commission's Charge



Legal Authority: Chapter 126 of the Acts of 2022

Full text: <https://budget.digital.mass.gov/summary/fy23/outside-section/section-144-special-commission-on-state-institutions>

Summary:

There shall be a special commission to study and report on the history of state institutions for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities or mental health conditions in the commonwealth including, but not limited to, the Walter E. Fernald state school and the Metropolitan state hospital.

The commission shall:

- A. Review existing records** in the possession of the commonwealth related to the network of current and former state institutions for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities or mental health conditions;
- B. Examine the current availability of, and barriers to accessing, records** by former residents of such institutions, their descendants and relatives and the general public;



Commission's Charge (cont.)



- C. **Assess and compile records of burial locations** for the residents who died while in the care of such institutions;
- D. **Determine the likelihood and possible locations of unmarked graves** at sites of former state institutions for people with intellectual or developmental disabilities or mental health conditions; and
- E. **Design a framework for public recognition** of the commonwealth's guardianship of residents with disabilities throughout history, which may include, but shall not be limited to, recommendations for memorialization and public education on the history and current state of the independent living movement, deinstitutionalization and the inclusion of people with disabilities.

The commission shall file a report of its findings and recommendations to the State Secretary, the Clerks of the Senate and House of Representatives, the Joint Committee on Children, Families and Persons with Disabilities and the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery not later than **June 1, 2025**.

The Massachusetts Office on Disability shall make the report publicly available in an accessible format on the office's website.