



MASSACHUSETTS WORKERS' COMPENSATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

LAFAYETTE CITY CENTER • 2 AVENUE DE LAFAYETTE
BOSTON, MA 02111

PHONE: (857) 321-7379 • FAX: (617) 727-7122
mass.gov/orgs/workers-compensation-advisory-council

JOHN A. PULGINI
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TODD R. JOHNSON
VICE-CHAIR

MAUREEN O'CONNELL
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MAURA HEALEY
GOVERNOR

KIM DRISCOLL
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

Present: John Pulgini, Todd Johnson, Michael Hess, Teri McHugh, Kevin Snyder, Emily Spieler, James Steenbruggen, Patrick Walsh, Stephen Falvey, Michael Kelly, Bernard Mulholland, Michael Ackland; DIA Director Sheri Bowles, Director of Administration Bill Taupier, Senior Judge Omar Hernández, General Counsel Philip Imbrescia, WCTF Director Holly Anderson, Director of Investigations Jon Solomon, Director of Operations Jeanne Natale, DIA - Maryann Brunton, Shamia Monroe, Vinnie Lopes; Daniel Judson – WCRIBMA; Julie Bowler - Atlantic Charter; Isabel Hernandez - Healthe Systems; Cory Wedding - MyMatrix; Caleb Huntington – Division of Insurance; Mary-Beth McGrath – Human Resources Division; and Maureen O'Connell.

AGENDA

Date: April 8, 2026
Location: Department of Industrial Accidents - **via WebEx**
Lafayette City Center | 2 Avenue de
Lafayette, Boston, MA 02111
Time: 9:00 A.M.

- **CHAIR WELCOME**
Roll Call
- **ACTION ITEMS**
 - Minutes – February 11, 2026
 - Minutes – March 11, 2026
- **DIA UPDATE**
Director's Update – Sheri Bowles, Director
Judicial Update - Senior Judge Omar Hernández, Senior Judge
 - Conference | Hearing | Reviewing Board Queue
 - Impartial Medical Exams | PhysiciansVital Statistics - Bill Taupier, Director of Administration
 - Cases Filed with DIA | Enforcement and Compliance
 - Workers' Compensation Trust Fund | Personnel Update
- **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**
Legislation

Chair John Pulgini began the meeting at 9:01am with a roll call. With a quorum present, a motion was made by Council Member Stephen Falvey, seconded by Council Member James Steenbruggen, and with no one opposed, the Council was able to vote on the February 11, 2026 minutes. With a quorum present, a motion was made by Council Member Michael Hess, seconded by Council Member Teri McHugh, and with no one opposed, the Council was able to vote on the March 11, 2026, minutes.

Without questions, the floor was directed to Director Sheri Bowles.

Director Sheri Bowles indicated that the agency numbers look good. The new DIA Springfield office will open on Monday May 4, 2026. The old office will be closing at the end of day on Thursday April 30, 2026. A notice will be placed on the DIA website. There may be delays.

Without questions for Director Bowles, the floor was directed to Senior Judge Omar Hernández.

Senior Judge Omar Hernández confirmed that Judge Maureen Counihan began working in the Boston office this week and wanted to welcome Judge Counihan to the DIA. Senior Judge Hernández doesn't expect a steep learning curve as they have an extensive workers' compensation background. Senior Judge Hernández had positive news to share: in mid-late April, conferences will be modified and then ramp up. Two administrative secretaries have been hired and one employee in the impartial unit. The numbers are maintained and that is a credit to Dele Edebiri and his staff in the conciliation unit, attorneys, judges, and the team. Regarding the pending hearing decisions, the two-year outlier will help with the appeal process. The review board decisions are down, decisions that needed to be completed were successful.

Vice Chair Todd Johnson asked about the impartial fee. It is critical as the fee hasn't been adjusted since 2012. As of now, Senior Judge Hernández mentioned that the impartial physicians' roster is down 30-40 physicians since that time and confirms that it has been a challenge to recruit physicians because of the low fee, something needs to be done, a public hearing to have further discussions.

Vice Chair Johnson added that the Council may need to revisit the letter sent to the Executive Office of Labor and Workforce Development. The are systemic issues that need to be addressed. Chair Pulgini echoed the concerns and is not clear on the hold up.

Without questions for Senior Judge Omar Hernández, the floor was directed to Bill Taupier, Director of Administration.

Within the Webex chat, Caleb Huntington – Division of Insurance asked Senior Judge Omar Hernández what statute of code the impartial fees were under. Senior Judge Hernández confirmed that it was 452 CMR regulations that discussed the fees for impartial medical services.

The Monthly Statistical Report Card can be found under Publications on the Workers' Compensation Advisory Council's website.

Mr. Taupier presented the Monthly Statistical Report Card slide deck for the Department of Industrial Accident (DIA) units. **Note:** The Commonwealth's accounting system has migrated from MMARS to Mosaic and there are some issues that are being worked out, causing delays in the payment system. Some of the numbers (impartial and referral fees) will adjust at next month's iteration.

With respect to **Conciliations**, in February 497 cases were resolved (55.8%) and 394 were referred to conference. The average waiting period for a conference is **8-28** weeks. With respect to the April 2026 **Conference** queue: 712 and **Hearing** queue: 1,739. **Pending** hearing decisions: 12 for the month of March 2026. **Review Board** inventory: 14, First Report of Injury (**FROI**) filings for FY'26: 23,192 with 2,988 First Reports filed in March and 882 cases. **Compliance** and enforcement for March: 6,217 compliance checks, 243 field investigations, and 124 Stop Work Orders (**Investigations Unit is down 4 positions**) and 480 more people are covered by workers' compensation insurance. Workers' Compensation **Trust Fund**: 79 uninsured injuries (trending same as last fiscal year), \$3,777,457 in payments against open claims and \$744,754 recovered by the Civil Litigation. **Assessments**: \$39,523,588; **Personnel**: 187 employees (down from January 2026 – 193).

Vice Chair Johnson asked Mr. Taupier about the timing of the budget and assessment process. Mr. Taupier confirmed that it was ongoing until the end of spring with a published rate effective July 1, 2026 (FY'27). There are no preliminary figures yet.

Vice Chair Johnson asked about the pending litigation in court, how that will affect the trust fund budget and what the impact will be on the litigation side.

General Counsel Philip Imbrescia confirmed that the three cases will have an impact on insurers, the second injury fund and COLA, and they are still assessing what that impact will be. There should be more solid figures in the next month or so.

Vice Chair Johnson asked if it was fair to say that there will be a change, positive reduction in assessments, and may want more money from the employer community. Once those numbers become available please forward to the Council so that we continue to have a line of sight on the subject. Vice Chair Johnson thanked General Counsel Imbrescia and appreciated the information.

Without questions for Mr. Taupier, the floor was directed to Maureen O'Connell, Executive Director.

Executive Director Maureen O'Connell provided an update to the Council. Since our last meeting, updated legislation from the Joint Committee on Labor and Workforce Development: H 2094, H

2122, H 2131, H 2133, H 2169, H 3995 – accompanied study order. If you'd like a copy of the excel spreadsheet, please reach out to me by email after the meeting.

Without questions for Executive Director O'Connell, Chair Pulgini ended the meeting at 9:25am

Next Meeting: Tentatively scheduled for May 13, 2026