



## MASSACHUSETTS WORKERS' COMPENSATION ADVISORY COUNCIL

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JOHN A. PULGINI  
CHAIR

TODD R. JOHNSON  
VICE-CHAIR

MAUREEN O'CONNELL  
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

MAURA HEALEY  
GOVERNOR

KIM DRISCOLL  
LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR

**Present:** John Pulgini, Todd Johnson, Michael Hess, Emily Spieler, Teri McHugh, Kevin Snyder, James Steenbruggen, Stephen Falvey, Michael Kelly, Bernard Mulholland, Michael Ackland, Nancy Segreve; 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, Donna Gringas, Sharon Herriage and Vinnie Lopes; Attorney Patrick Francomano; Attorney David O'Connor; Roman Dolinschi-WCRI; Cara Toomey - WCRIBMA; Julie Bowler - Atlantic Charter; Isabel Hernandez - Healthe Systems; Cory Wedding - MyMatrix; and Maureen O'Connell.

### Agenda

**Date:** February 11, 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 EOLWD
- Secretary Lauren E. Jones

Action Items

- Minutes – January 14, 2026
- Correspondence – DIA letter on staffing/funding

DIA Update

- Director's Update – Sheri Bowles, Director
- Judicial Update - Senior Judge Omar Hernández, Senior Judge
  - Conference | Hearing | Reviewing Board Queue ▫ Impartial Medical Exams | Physicians

- Vital Statistics - Bill Taupier, Director of Administration
  - Cases Filed with DIA | Enforcement and Compliance
  - Workers' Compensation Trust Fund | Personnel Update

#### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

- Legislation

**Next Meeting:** Tentatively scheduled for March 11, 2026

Vice Chair Todd Johnson began the meeting at 9:05am with a roll call (8 members to start with Chair Pulgini joining a few minutes late making 8 voting members present for the quorum) and asked for a motion to approve minutes for January 14, 2026.– Council Member James Steenbruggen made the motion, Council Member Michael Hess seconded the motion, and without anyone opposed, unanimous vote, the minutes for January 14, 2026 were approved.

Vice Chair Johnson asked Executive Director Maureen O'Connell if EOLWD Secretary Lauren Jones was in attendance; she was not able to join.

Vice Chair Johnson asked if Council Members had comments or questions about the Draft letter to EOLWD regarding DIA staffing/funding. Council Member Bernie Mulholland thanked Council Member Teri McHugh for drafting the letter on DIA staffing/funding. Vice Chair Johnson mentioned that the loss in employees puts a stress on the agency and that DIA staffing is needed in the dispute resolution department to reduce backlog and shorten queues. All stakeholders should be aware that the DIA is funded by employer assessments and do not rely on taxpayer funds. The Council is concerned about this and does not want this to get lost in the shuffle.

Without comments or concerns, Vice Chair Johnson asked for a motion to approve the Draft letter to EOLWD regarding DIA staffing/funding. Council Member James Steenbruggen made the motion and Council Member Michael Hess seconded the motion. With all in favor, and no one opposed, the Draft letter was approved.

Senior Judge Hernández thanked the Council for the letter, it is much needed, and I thank you for the support.

Without questions, the floor was directed to Director Sheri Bowles. Director Sheri Bowles indicated that there was no update to provide. Thank you to the Council

for supporting the FTE cap and for reiterating the funding mechanism in your discussion. The budget cycle for FY'27 is ongoing and the reinforcement is greatly appreciated. Vice Chair Johnson asked Director Bowles to let the Council know if there was another audience to send letter to, circulating it widely as necessary.

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

Senior Judge Omar Hernández confirmed that the conciliations are solid thanks to Dele and the staff. Judge Maher retired last month, thank you to everyone who celebrated his retirement. Confirming a new judge soon, Judge Maureen Counihan will be sworn in soon. Judge McGrath will move to the DIA Worcester office as of March 23, 2026 and once sworn in Judge Counihan will sit in the DIA Boston office. We are hopeful that with these changes the numbers will trend downward. We could add more judges to conferences, but the staff is working hard, and it is not my intention to burn them out. The queue in Worcester is still out of order. Senior Judge Hernández appreciated the support of the letter, any effort to resolve the issue is appreciated. With respect to the pending hearing decisions, the number has increased since last month, one case hit the 2+ year mark. That case is complicated, case appealed, and there's no concerns with the numbers, maintaining.

Vice Chair Johnson asked Senior Judge Hernández if there was any news on the impartial physicians roster or letter WCAC sent. The response was no and Senior Judge Hernández mentioned it to the Governor's Council during his reappointment hearing recently. It's an important issue and it is frustrating for the physicians and staff.

Vice Chair Johnson mentioned that the Council will continue to support efforts.

Without questions for Senior Judge Omar Hernández, the floor was directed to Bill Taupier, Director of Administration. 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. With respect to **Conciliations**, in December 510 cases were resolved (52.4%) and 464 were referred to conference. The average waiting period for a conference is 16-36 weeks. With respect to the February 2026 **Conference queue: 1,108** and **Hearing queue: 1,735**. **Pending hearing decisions: 10** for the month of January 2026. **Review Board inventory: 17**, Exam fees collected:

\$708,330, **Attorneys fees:** \$56,018,835. **First Report of Injury (FROI) filings:** 2,467. **Compliance and enforcement** for FY'26: 23,446 field checks, 73 Stop Work Orders (Investigations Unit is down two positions) and over 3,000+ covered by workers' compensation insurance. **Workers' Compensation Trust Fund:** 65 uninsured injuries, \$3,777,457 in payments against open claims and \$618,743 recovered by the **Civil Litigation Unit**. **Second Injury payments:** \$16,629,209. COLA reimbursements: \$2,707,006. Assessment collection: \$39,503,588. **Personnel:** 192 employees.

Without questions for Mr. Taupier, the floor was directed to Deputy General Counsel Holly Anderson.

Deputy General Counsel Holly Anderson addressed the Council and provided an update on the Workers' Compensation Trust Fund for FY'25 and FY'26 as of January 2026: 216 claims were made, 1 paid over \$100,000 with 206 payments under \$100,000, and 56 received lump sum settlements. The pattern is consistent – long tail of cases that resolve within the first five-year mark. For FY'26 there were 10 high-cost claims: \$474,000+ with 11 below \$100,000, and 165 claims received payment, 155 below \$100,000 and 4 were catastrophic with one death.

Vice Chair Johnson asked about the recent court decision that could impact the trust fund. General Counsel Philip Imbrescia commented about the recent appeals court decision that is consistent with the Arrowood and MIIF interpretations of the Workers' Compensation Trust Fund - at this time the department is assessing impact to the trust fund.

Vice Chair Johnson asked Deputy General Counsel Anderson whether there is ongoing attempts to settle cases, Deputy General Counsel Anderson confirmed that attempts are made by subrogation – the cases mentioned during the WCTF updated included medical and indemnity payments. Vice Chair Johnson asked about the funding number, what's the gap in DIA staffing, given the recent departures of stenographers and judicial secretaries. The DIA is short approximately 6-8 positions confirmed Director Bowles.

Without questions for Deputy General Counsel Anderson, 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: **H2051** and **S1310**: An Act relative to Workers' Compensation is listed as ought to pass; **H2205** An Act updating the

Open Meeting Law referred to the Senate Committee on Ways and Means; **H1298** Workers' Compensation disfigurement extension order filed until March 18, 2026; **H2094** Wage theft extension order filed until March 18, 2026; **H2162** Prevailing wage extension order; and **H4061** Workers' Compensation premium fraud referred to House Committee on Ways and Means. We will continue to follow legislation and update at next meeting. If you'd like a copy of the excel spreadsheet please reach out to me by email after the meeting.

Senior Judge Hernández addressed the Council and guests about the rumors of DIA Judge McNamara retiring. Judge McNamara is not retiring; it's a nuisance to keep addressing these rumors and it is unprofessional.

Vice Chair Johnson added that the Executive Office of Health and Human Services has reached out and is looking to schedule a meeting with Chair Pulgini and Vice Chair Johnson about the workers' compensation medical reimbursement rate, Council will be updated as the process moves along.

Without questions for Executive Director O'Connell, Vice Chair Johnson asked for a motion to end the meeting, Council Member James Steenbruggen made a motion, Council Member Stephen Falvey seconded that motion, and with a motion approved, unanimous vote, Vice Chair Johnson ended the meeting at 9:32am