



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council

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Legislative & Public Awareness Committee Draft Minutes for October 19, 2021 Members Present (P) Not Present (NP)

Deb Arcoleo (P)	Passle Helminski (P)	Michele Leahy (P)
Juliet Marsala (P)	John Seely (P)	William Del Toro Vargas (NP)
Anthony McCloskey (P)	Jeanette Alexander (P)	

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff: Not present.

PaRC Staff: Chris Todd

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

- No additions to the agenda

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

Ms. Passle Helminski motioned to approve the agenda and past minutes. Ms. Deb Arcoleo seconded the motion. Ms. Juliet Marsala abstained. The motion passed.

Discussion and Possible Action Items:

**Discussion for Rough Draft of 2021-2022 State Legislative Position Papers
2020-2021 State Position Paper is attached
Document with updated current State Legislation recommended by PaRC
members/related to PaRC mission to be reviewed is attached
Any additional items to be included or removed from State Position Paper**

- Ms. Deb Arcoleo agreed with Mr. John Seely to continue to include the same issues in the next State Position Paper that was on last years. Those issues include Sustain Full Funding for OVR Services to match all available Federal Funds, Expedited Employment, Collaboration of Services for Persons with Neurological Injuries in Pennsylvania, Adequate Funding of the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH), Adequate Funding of the Office of Deaf and Hard of Hearing (ODHH), Centers for Independent Living (CILs), Transportation, and the Disability Caucus.
- Ms. Michele Leahy would like to include information regarding benefits counseling and related accountability and follow up for Work Incentives Planning and Assistance (WIPA) services within the State Position Paper.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala explained that she thinks issues surrounding the funding/services for WIPA benefits counseling is not a legislative issue at this point

and more of an operational issue, suggested bringing those concerns up with OVR, the PaRC Policy & Customer Satisfaction Committee and asked if Social Media Committee could post information on the PaRC Facebook page for informative and educational purposes.

- Ms. Michele Leahy stated that she often posts Work Incentive Seminar Events (WISE) on the PaRC Facebook page.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala asked staff to reach out to OVR staff about requesting information on the use of benefits counseling, how many providers are enrolled to provide benefits counseling, and that a barrier to benefits counseling is not something that legislators can change but that counselors are required to take a training provided by Social Security to become a certified counselor and that it has a priority list.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala suggested the following bills for committee to consider adding to the State Position Paper; House Bill (HB) 1567, HB 1313, Senate Bill (SB) 455, SB 742, and HB 726.
- Mr. John Seely stated the importance of having Disability Rights in the education curriculum in terms of current state legislation that includes curriculum for inclusiveness and Civil Rights.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala inquired about adding language for State Position Paper about the funding from the American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) that will need to be matched by Pennsylvania and asking OVR about their outreach to OLTL and ODP that will go to support employment services to increase employment outcomes for people with disabilities in the state waiver programs. Expressed the consideration that this may be an opportunity to improve these agencies' infrastructure, data sharing, operations, personnel, and technological upgrades.
- Mr. John Seely inquired about adding language supporting state legislation for Transition to Competitive Employment as an Employment 1st state and citing many states that have already passed legislation supporting this rather than waiting for Federal Legislation.

**Discussion for Rough Draft of 2021-2022 Federal Legislative Position Papers
2020-2021 Federal Position Paper is attached
Document with updated current Federal Legislation recommended by PaRC
members/related to PaRC mission to be reviewed is attached
Any additional items to be included or removed from Federal Position Paper**

- Mr. John Seely inquired about additions or edits for the language covering Rehabilitation Act, WIOA, Transportation, ABLE Act, and COVID-19. Attendees agreed with keeping these items on the Position Paper.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala stated that SB2065, HB3763 could be added with the comment that it is supported as a stop gap or supported but comes up short. Suggested SB 2481 be added as supported legislation.
- Mr. John Seely reported he will continue to work on an updated draft of both position papers with the discussed additions and edits, asked members to continue to share ideas with committee and staff, and asked members if it would be a good idea to share edits/additions with staff within the next two weeks in order to come up with a final draft that could be shared at the next Full Council Meeting on November 16th, 2021 for approval.
- Ms. Passle Helminski agreed this would be a good idea.

- Ms. Juliet Marsala suggested adding a section thanking legislators and memorializing legislation that was passed.
- Ms. Passle Helminski informed members that each Legislative visit begins with thanking legislators for being champions of their mission through the passing of specific legislation.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala suggested making posts that inform and educate on social media about supported legislation from the Position Papers, that is careful to only be education and not lobbying.
- Ms. Michele Leahy asked members and staff to please send her items to post on Facebook and brought up concerns about posts needing to have pictures and videos to get viewers to engage.
- Mr. John Seely suggested members making short videos talking about educating about supported legislation to be shared on social media.

Discussion for Upcoming PaRC Meetings with Legislators in November

Determine Meeting times

Determine which Legislative Offices to contact/poll

Member talking points to cover

- Members determined that the morning of November 17th, 2021 would work well to hold virtual legislative meetings with state legislators.
- Ms. Passle Helminski stated that she would like to meet with legislators and their staff that members met with in August 2021 to follow up on topics they previously discussed. Those members are Representative Dan Miller, Representative Ryan Bizzarro, Amanda Wolfe, Representative Martin Causer.
- Mr. John Seely suggested also inviting other members of leadership to the PaRC legislative meetings that would include Senator Lisa Baker, Senator Christine M. Tartaglione, Senator Jake Corman, and Senator Dan Laughlin. Suggested speaking with legislators that are running for governor next year.
- Ms. Passle Helminski agreed with meeting with candidates for governor next year and that it is key they understand the importance of the employment of people with disabilities.
- Ms. Juliet Marsala expressed importance of meeting with legislators that are sponsors of legislation that the PaRC agrees with.

Schedule next meeting

- Mr. John Seely suggested quarterly meetings for the fourth Tuesday of that month. The next meetings are scheduled for January 25, 2022 from 9:30 AM to 10:30 AM and April 26, 2022 9:30 AM to 10:30 AM.

Adjourn

Ms. Passle Helminski motioned to adjourn. Ms. Deb Arcoleo seconded the motion. All were in favor.