



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council

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Legislative & Public Awareness Committee Draft Minutes for January 25, 2022 Members Present (P) Not Present (NP)

Deb Arcoleo (P)

Passle Helminski (P)

Michele Leahy (P)

Juliet Marsala (NP)

John Seely (NP)

William Del Toro Vargas (NP)

Anthony McCloskey (P)

Jeanette Alexander (P)

Office of Vocational Rehabilitation (OVR) Staff Present: Tracie Maille, Acting Bureau Manager within Bureau Central Operations, Cheryl Novak

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

- Ms. Passle Helminski stated she would like to add to the agenda discussion for nominations for a new Chair of the Legislative Committee.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

Ms. Michele Leahy motioned to approve the agenda with additions and past minutes. Ms. Deb Arcoleo seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Discussion and Possible Action Items:

Discussion for nominations for a new Chair of the Legislative Committee

- Ms. Passle Helminski informed members that the current Chair of the Committee is not in attendance today and has not responded to any form of correspondence related to the PaRC since before the Holidays. Would like to discuss with members who may be available to accept nomination for Chair and Co-Chair of the Legislative Committee and will provide this information at the next Executive Committee meeting. Ms. Passle Helminski asked Mr. Anthony McCloskey if he would be available to serve as Co-Chair or Chair if Ms. Jeanette Alexander would not be able to serve.
- Ms. Michele Leahy stated that she would like to nominate Ms. Jeanette Alexander for Chair of the Legislative Committee.

- Ms. Jeanette Alexander informed members that she would need to discuss with her supervisors at the Bureau of Special Education to ensure that would be appropriate and also ensure it was not a conflict of interest.
- Mr. Anthony McCloskey informed members he would be available to serve as either Co-Chair or Chair of the Committee.

Discussion/Recommendation for Draft of 2021-2022 State Legislative Position Papers

Any changes from previous year are highlighted

Member recommended Legislation (with links) included on Position Papers

Any additional items to be included or removed from State Position Paper

- Ms. Passle Helminski reviewed PaRC Position Paper and asked staff to share the document on the screen via Zoom. Inquired and requested starting a watchlist to include any legislation that would involve the Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP). Informed members that legislation was passed in 2018 which snuck in the use of brokers for MATP, that would affect people with disabilities going to doctors, could reduce funding for the bus companies and reduce bus lines which would affect people with disabilities getting to their jobs. Brokers may not provide fully accessible transportation, may not load wheelchairs into vehicles, know of laws about service dogs, don't have to knock on your door, informed Representative Bizzarro who formed a coalition. This matter is under review in the state Senate, there is no associated legislation at this time, Department of Human Services (DHS) is reviewing the matter and waiting for report. Each of the statements and pieces of legislation on the State Position Paper was reviewed.

Mr. Anthony McCloskey motioned to approve all of the supported legislation included within the 2021-2022 State Legislative Position Paper. Ms. Jeanette Alexander seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Discussion/Recommendation for Draft of 2021-2022 Federal Legislative Position Papers

Any changes from previous year are highlighted

Member recommended Legislation (with links) included on Position Papers

Any additional items to be included or removed from Federal Position Paper

- Ms. Passle Helminski asked to screenshare the Federal Legislative Position Paper via Zoom and reviewed the statements and legislation with members.
- Ms. Michele Leahy stated that the problem with the Raise the Wage Act 2021 is that it does not match employment and work incentives, maintaining eligibility, Social Security is not caught up to the \$15.00 an hour minimum wage, and until provisions are included to match would not be in support of that legislation. Stated agreement with ABLE Age Adjustment Act and also stated that it should include ability to transfer other benefits such as retirement funds. Will abstain from voting

for the Federal legislation. Stated the legislation needs to be improved before being supported.

- Ms. Passle Helminski stated that her opinion is that the included legislation is not perfect but serves as a good starting point to have on file that can later be improved upon. Stated concerns about transportation and that certain bus lines may go out of business and that Transportation Alliance is working hard to ensure accessible transportation.

Ms. Deb Arcoleo made a motion to approve all of the supported legislation included within the 2021-2022 Federal Legislative Position Paper. Ms. Jeanette Alexander seconded the motion. Ms. Michele Leahy opposed. The motion passed.

Ms. Jeanette Alexander motioned to approve the 2021-2022 Federal and State Position Papers. Ms. Deb Arcoleo seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Discussion for Upcoming PaRC Meetings with Legislators in February

Determine Meeting date/times

Determine which Legislative Offices to contact/poll

Member talking points to cover

Discussion regarding legislation that affects funding of Medical Assistance Transportation Program (MATP). Passle has new information regarding potential legislation that remains in Committee and has requested inviting Nolan Ritchie, Executive Director, Senate Transportation Committee, Office of Senator Wayne Langerholc, for Meetings with Legislators in February

- Members agreed to choose a date for meetings with Federal Legislators at a future meeting and to hold meetings with State Legislators on February 22, 2022 from 1:00 PM to 4:00 PM.
- Ms. Passle Helminski stated she would like staff to poll for Legislative meetings with Ms. Amanda Wolfe, Mr. Nolan Ritchie, Representative Dan Miller, Ms. Sarah Speed, Representative Kathy Rapp, Senator Lisa Baker, and Senator Christine Tartaglione.
- Ms. Michele Leahy requested that staff research positions of Senator Tommy Tomlinson and Representative Frank Farry.
- Members agreed to poll to schedule a Committee meeting in late February or Early March and will provide staff with potential dates. Ms. Jeanette Alexander will not be available the last week of February or the first week of March.
- Ms. Jeanette Alexander suggested adding to the watchlist legislation that would include Social Security benefits catching up to the proposed Federal Minimum Wage.

Ms. Michele Leahy motioned to approve the document that includes talking points and legislators for PaRC Member Legislative Meetings. Ms. Jeanette Alexander seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Adjourn

Mr. Anthony McCloskey motioned to adjourn the meeting. Ms. Deb Arcoleo seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.