



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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Legislative & Public Awareness Committee Minutes for March 10, 2023

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

Jeanette Alexander (P)

Julia Grant Barol (P)

Lynn Heitz (P)

Michele Leahy (P)

William Del Toro Vargas (P)

Paul Fogle (P)

Michelle Mitchell (P)

Jessica Keogh (P)

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd

OVR Staff Present: Lee Ann Stewart

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA: None

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES:

MOTION was made by Ms. Jeanette Alexander to approve today's agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Michelle Mitchell seconded the motion. All were in favor.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Pennsylvania Legislative Services (MYPLS) Overview of Communication Connection Service, Amyra Nadberazny, Vice President of Sales and Marketing, Pennsylvania Legislative Services

- Ms. Amyra Nadberazny is a female owned and led legislative services company that was established in 2001 providing 8 publications, 2 research based databases focusing on legislation and media based information and offer a suite of advocacy tools. Provided the advocacy tool Communication Connection service via screen share and demonstrated how it is used as a government relations database service and email blast service. The information can be both exported and used within the website application. Sorting and filtering options include specific legislation, House and Senate Committees, specific Legislators and their parties, regions, counties,

freshman Legislators, and others. The email blast service allows attachments, different email addresses to be sent from or replied to, analytics can be requested by contacting MYPLS staff to share reports via spreadsheets, analytics are not automatically available for users, can be sent to many different media outlets and filtered, filters for the Executive Legislative branch agencies, press secretaries, miscellaneous contacts such as County Commissions, PA Legislative staff, Chiefs of Staff, Leadership, and others. Some legislators use a contact form as their preferred choice of communication, MYPLS provides the link for those forms. All Legislative information is updated automatically on a daily basis including their office locations within the Capitol. U.S. Congressional members do not provide email addresses but do provide phone and address information.

- Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired about the testing the accessibility of Federal and State Legislator's contact forms with screen reading technology such as JAWS.
- Ms. Nadberazny reported that the accessibility of the Legislator's contact forms would not be something that MYPLS would have control over and would be happy to inquire about with the Legislators' webmaster and report back regarding accessibility / ADA requirements.
- Ms. Mitchell inquired if members should postpone a vote on recommending the purchase of the MYPLS service until the accessibility question is answered.
- Mr. Vargas explained that the accessibility of Legislative Contact Forms is not controlled by MYPLS and come from the Legislators. MYPLS is a privately owned and created website and database, is not managed by the Commonwealth or the same organizations that manage the Legislators' websites and contact forms.
- Ms. Heitz stated that she was told when meeting with Federal Legislators that their websites are managed by different IT companies and reported that many were not accessible when attempting to retrieve contact information. Reported that the MYPLS database will not be accessible by screen reading technology if it is not coded correctly.
- Members requested staff inquire if the MYPLS website and database is accessible for screen readers and table the discussion until that information is provided. Members requested that staff explore other resources for Legislative contact information.

Letter to all State Legislators Highlighting the PaRC Annual Report (Draft and Estimate of Cost Attached)

- Members reviewed the draft and estimated cost of the printed reports, letters, and mailing. Discussed potential issues with the reports and/or letters not directly reaching the Legislators through various forms of delivery through in person contact, mailing, and emailing. Discussed different advantages of providing printed reports, printed letters with links, and electronic letter with links.
- Members suggested including an option in the letter to request a hard copy of the report and writing out the links in the printed version using Bitly.com to shorten the links. Requested that staff make those changes and provide the letter to Executive Committee for review.

MOTION was made by Ms. Michelle Mitchell to recommend both emailing and mailing a printed version of the letter to all State Legislators Highlighting the PaRC Annual Report. Ms. Lynn Heitz seconded the motion. The motion passed.

Letter to PennDOT regarding PaRC Public Comment for PA Transportation Network Twelve-Year Plan (Draft attached)

<https://www.penndot.pa.gov/pages/all-news-details.aspx?newsid=1024>

- Member reviewed a draft of the letter.

Motion was made by Ms. Julia Barol to recommend the letter to PennDOT regarding PaRC Public Comment for PA Transportation Network Twelve-Year Plan to Executive Committee. Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Talking Points for March 30th and 31st State Legislative Meetings Committee Meeting Dates for 2023

- Ms. Michele Leahy reported issues with Act 69 “Workers with Job Success”, legislation that is the conduit for Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD) which allows for earnings of up to \$78,000 per year and resource assets. The issue with the legislation is that once employment is ceased a 401K may become unveiled and waivers for Medicaid services could be ceased because resources are then seen as an asset. Stated that we need to think about improving Medicaid and Waiver eligibility to avoid being penalized for working.
- Ms. Julia Barol reported that there is a backward clause to Act 69 where one could return back to the regular MAWD. With completing only one hour of employment per month those assets are still sheltered, and Medicaid and Waiver eligibility could remain in place.
- Ms. Leahy stated that may not be a good way to go about the process in case someone was not able to work one hour per month due to medical concerns.
- Mr. Paul Fogle suggested staff adding information and concerns about Act 69 and MAWD to a list of Legislative talking points. Suggested starting an email chain of a draft of talking points and reaching out to the SILC to inquire about their talking points.
- Mr. Vargas requested that the committee schedule an additional meeting for March 17th from 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM to continue the discussion of legislative talking points.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Ms. Heitz to adjourn. Ms. Alexander seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.