



# Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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## Legislative & Public Awareness Committee Minutes for June 30, 2023

### Members Present (P)

### Not Present (NP)

William Del Toro Vargas (P)  
Lynn Heitz (NP)  
Michelle Mitchell (P)

Jeanette Alexander (P)  
Michele Leahy (NP)  
Jessica Keogh (NP)

Julia Grant Barol (P)  
Paul Fogle (NP)

**PaRC Staff Present:** Chris Todd

**OVR Staff Present:** Cheryl Novak, James Whitonis, Audrey O'Connor

**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:

#### MYPLS Services

- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas explained that he and another committee member were provided with a trial testing period to review accessibility of the MYPLS site. What has been reviewed thus far is accessible, MYPLS is willing to correct accessibility issues, and that the service would be for one year with the option to discontinue the service if members are unhappy with it after that period.

***MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to recommend purchasing one-year of the MYPLS Communication Connection service. Ms. Jeanette Alexander seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

#### State / Federal Position Papers and Watchlists

- Members explained that they reviewed the State and Federal Watchlist documents

in preparation for review of legislation to be included in the PaRC Position Papers. Watchlist documents were shared prior to the meeting and reviewed during the meeting.

- Members provided updated language for the State and Federal Position Papers regarding OVR Full Funding, impacts of COVID-19, and requested follow up with each stakeholder or entity mentioned to ensure that the correct information, amounts, and language remain correct.
- Members recommended adding information about the Employment First Commission and their mission statement. Members requested that an email be provided to all committee members to check staff's work and be given a deadline to make any edits or additions to the State Position Paper.
- For the Federal Position Paper members suggested changing the language regarding COVID-19 with similar updates included in the State Position Paper. Members requested staff research potential legislation for the bullet point mentioning VR services for veterans with disabilities.
- Members requested the following be corrected and asked OVR to review what language they would like to include regarding personnel development:
  - Reverse changes to the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) that reduced the standards/requirements to be a qualified rehabilitation counselor working with business or customers.
- Members requested that the following bullet points be reviewed with the appropriate contacts, removed from the Federal Position Paper, and included for discussion at the next committee meeting:
  - Clarify when to advise customers of their right to request mediation or due process through the Client assistance Program to review a decision made by VR.
  - Require legal training for all impartial due process hearing officers and staff.

***MOTION was made by Ms. Michelle Mitchell to recommend [HB151](#) be supported in the State Position Paper. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

***MOTION was made by Ms. Jeanette Alexander to recommend [HB181](#) be supported in the State Position Paper. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

***MOTION was made by Ms. Michelle Mitchell to recommend [HB1135](#) be supported in the State Position Paper. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

***MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to recommend [H.R.2840](#) be supported in the Federal Position Paper. Ms. Jeanette Alexander seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

***MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to recommend [H.R.2941](#) be supported in the Federal Position Paper. Ms. Michelle Mitchell seconded the motion. Ms.***

**Jeanette Alexander abstained. The motion passed.**

**MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to recommend updates to the State Position Paper discussed today be forwarded to Executive Committee for review following the opportunity for all committee members to check staff's work and provide any edits or additions. Ms. Michelle Mitchell seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

**MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to remove the following language from the Federal Position Paper and add discussion of language to next meeting's agenda: Reverse changes to the Comprehensive System of Personnel Development (CSPD) that reduced the standards/requirements to be a qualified rehabilitation counselor working with business or customers Ms. Mitchell seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

**MOTION was made by Ms. Mitchell to remove the following language from the Federal Position Paper and discuss at the next committee meeting: Clarify when to advise customers of their right to request mediation or due process through the Client assistance Program to review a decision made by VR. Require legal training for all impartial due process hearing officers and staff. Ms. Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

#### **Schedule next committee meetings**

- Members agreed to hold the next committee meeting for Friday, August 25<sup>th</sup> from 11:00AM to 12:00PM.

#### **Adjourn**

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