



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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Legislative & Public Awareness Committee Minutes for September 15, 2023, 2023

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

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

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

Julia Grant Barol (P)
Paul Fogle (P)
Joan Goodman (P)

OVR Staff Present: James Whitonis, Chris Harbert

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA: None

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES:

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

AGENDA ITEMS:

Review Position Paper Language to be Updated

- Members reviewed proposed updated language for the Position Papers, approved of the language provided, and requested that staff look into condensing language for readability. Members requested that staff inquire with OVR about condensing the language provided. Members suggested that there be two versions of the Position Papers, one that includes the full language and one abridged version with condensed language.

Preparation for Meetings with State Legislators

Confirm meeting date/times

Legislative Offices

Talking Points

- Mr. William Del Toro Vargas requested that a reminder invitation to sign up for the Legislative Meetings be sent to all Full Council members.

- Members discussed options for holding meetings with Legislators on the morning of October 31st and the entire business day of November 15th. Requested staff to schedule a full day of meetings for November 15th and offer the option of October 31st if unavailable.
- Members requested that staff invite new members of the Legislature and the Labor & Industry Committee Leaders of both the State House and Senate.
- Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired about meeting with Federal Legislators.
- Mr. Del Toro Vargas requested to add discussion of inviting Pennsylvania's U.S. Senators and House Representatives to next month's meeting agenda.
- Mr. Del Toro Vargas requested that Legislative Committee leadership of the National Coalition of State Rehabilitation Councils (NCSRC) and Council of State Administrators of Vocational Rehabilitation (CSAVR) be invited to a Committee meeting to discuss Federal Legislative issues.
- Previous talking points included the benefits of ending the 14(c) Certificate Sub-minimum Wage Sheltered Workshops, continued full funding of OVR and information included in the Position Papers. Members discussed importance of legislation included in the memorandum regarding sub-minimum wages for State Contracts which is a step in the right direction as a first step to start working on the 14(c) Certificates. Members requested that this be a talking point for the upcoming meetings with Legislators.
- Members inquired if there are topics or Legislation that OVR recommends for talking points and if there are issues relating to Appropriations Committee. Mr. Chris Harbert informed members that he would inquire with OVR leadership and follow up.
- Members suggested providing an updated PowerPoint on what OVR does to be provided for meetings with new Legislators.
- Ms. Julia Barol stated that the Employment First Oversight Commission (EFOC) report will be coming out in October 2023 and provides some Legislative recommendations that could fit into the work done by the Council including:
 - Amending the Civil Service Reform Act to establish a Schedule A like program and Customized Employment in State Jobs which relates directly to the work that OVR does.
 - Amending Medical Assistance for Workers with Disabilities (MAWD) to align with new Workers with Job Success (WJS) categories.
 - Legislation that establishes Full Time Transition Counselors in each district.
 - This information will be broken down by topic in detail within the upcoming EFOC report.
- Members agreed to hold a work session to further discuss talking points for Legislative meetings.

State / Federal Legislative Watchlists

- Members reviewed items added to the Watchlist. Pennsylvania Senate Bill (SB746) relating to Service Dogs was previously recommended for consideration during public comment of the August 2023 Full Council meeting. Mr. Del Toro Vargas

explained that the public may question why specific Legislation is included/added to the Position Papers and how it relates to employment.

- Ms. Heitz explained that as a service dog user, if this is what you use for orientation and mobility to get from place to place and if your service dog is attacked while enroute to work, that could limit your ability to get to work and do your job.
- Members reviewed the following data collected for the outreach to State Legislators and their staff of the PaRC August Newsletter using MYPLS Communication Connection email blast service.
 - Opened 12
 - Blocked 5
 - Clicked 213
 - Deferred 1
 - Delivered 322
 - First opening 68
 - Loaded by proxy 53
 - Sent 327
 - Soft bounce 3
- Members requested polling for a Committee meeting for October 5th from 2:30 PM to 3:30 PM.

MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz to recommend support of SB746, include in the State Position Paper, and forward to Executive Committee for review. Ms. Michelle Mitchell seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Adjourn

MOTION was made by Ms. Jessica Keogh to adjourn. Ms. Lynn Heitz seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.