



# Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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## Legislative & Public Awareness Committee Minutes for January 12, 2024

### Members Present (P)

### Not Present (NP)

William Del Toro Vargas (P)	Julia Grant Barol (P)	Lynn Heitz (P)
Michele Leahy (NP)	Paul Fogle (P)	Joan Goodman (P)
Michelle Mitchell (P)	Jessica Keogh (NP)	

**OVR Staff Present:** James Whitonis, Chris Harbert

**PaRC Staff Present:** Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

**Guests Present:** Joyce Bender, Christine Griffin, Leanne Thomas, Sherry Lapaglia

**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. Lynn Heitz seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### AGENDA ITEMS:

**Collaborative Projects with Bender Consulting: Preliminary draft of a bill "Prohibiting the Subminimum Wage for Pennsylvanians with Disabilities in State Contracts" and Amend Civil Service Reform Act to establish Schedule A like program and customized employment in state jobs**

- Members explained that they understand the importance of establishing a system similar to the Federal Schedule A system for State jobs to expand employment opportunities for individuals with disabilities. Members agreed that OVR does a great job collaborating with the Office of Administration (OA) on identifying employment opportunities and understands that ensuring that continues through Legislation would be most effective. Ms. Lynn Heitz inquired if Bender Consulting is familiar with Schedule A and agreed there would be a great benefit to integrating Schedule A into the state employment system.

- Ms. Joyce Bender explained that Bender Consulting is very familiar with Schedule A and has worked closely with the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) identifying at least 600 individuals with disabilities for specific Federal jobs in which each were required to have a 7A Schedule Letter. Ms. Chris Griffin of Bender Consulting was also the Deputy Secretary of OPM and is very familiar with its development.
- Members explained they would also like to invite Bender Consulting to assist with the collaboration of other state entities on the project including the Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC) and other PaRC stakeholders. Ms. Julia Barol explained that Representative Dan Miller will be introducing Legislation on Schedule A at the State level in the coming months. Members will provide Representative Miller's Legislation for review upon availability.
- Ms. Griffin explained that the Federal definition of Schedule A could be used for this project and that she has a good understanding of the Schedule A definition having worked on the goal of employing people with disabilities as an Executive Director under President Obama. Other States and Cities have created similar forms of Schedule A which may also be used as research in this project with the PaRC.
- Members explained that in the past there was not a consensus reached on the definition of Schedule A in Pennsylvania and their hope is that this project with the assistance of Bender Consulting will help to reach a consensus through collaboration with the disability community, Commonwealth agencies, and State Legislators through education.
- Ms. Griffin explained that both herself and Ms. Bender have a lot of experience with providing education and developing educational materials about Schedule A, such as a brochure entitled the ABC's of Schedule A, that could be used in some capacity for this project with the PaRC. Education would also include talking to people the policy would benefit and to the agencies that would be hiring. Ms. Bender agreed and explained that getting everyone together with one voice will also be critical.
- Members inquired if OVR had any input regarding PaRC's project on Schedule A.
- Mr. Chris Harbert explained that OA handles Human Resources for OVR. OA and OVR continue to pilot the use of Customized Employment concepts within the Commonwealth. This type of support and advocacy would help answer many questions that OA is asking or would like to see done.
- Members provided background on a potential project regarding the phase out of subminimum wages and explained that in regard to subminimum wage, Representative Khan introduced a Bill that the Council supports that if enacted would end subminimum wages for any jobs under State Contracts. Members understood this would be a good start to end subminimum wages with the goal to

phase out all subminimum wages throughout the Commonwealth. Members would like assistance on this project with properly educating Legislators on sub minimum wages and the importance of Competitive Integrated Employment (CIE).

- Ms. Griffin inquired if members would like Bender to develop an education campaign for Legislators to learn the pros of ending subminimum wages and Legislation, educating the community, or educating both. Development of educational materials targeted toward families, organizations, legislators, and the community would be beneficial for educating on how to move beyond subminimum wages toward CIE.
- Members and attendees explained that members of the community, managed care organizations, Commonwealth agencies, advocates, and the Legislature need to be on the same page and be provided education on the phase out of subminimum wages to engage in a united front. Ms. Griffin inquired if OVR refers customers to sheltered workshops.
- Mr. Harbert explained that OVR strives to assist all customers with gaining CIE and does not refer or place customers in sheltered workshops.
- Ms. Griffin and Ms. Bender explained that highlighting some of the success stories of individuals and their families that have moved on from sheltered workshops to CIE would be of great benefit to help those hesitant to leave understand what is possible in regard to earning a competitive wage while maintaining meaningful, reliable employment with a higher purpose.
- PaRC Staff will provide any support needed to Bender Consulting regarding the administrative details involved for these projects in conjunction with the PaRC Legislative Committee. Bender Consulting will also inform the staff when additional meetings or information will be necessary with Council members.
- Members inquired if OVR could provide a statement of support to the Council regarding their support of this initiative. Mr. Harbert will provide that request to OVR Executive Director and keep the Council updated on their feedback.

### **State and Federal Position Paper Updates**

***MOTION was made by Ms. Heitz to approve the draft of the updated State Position Paper. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

***MOTION was made by Ms. Heitz to approve the draft of the updated Federal Position Paper. Ms. Joan Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### **State and Federal Legislative Watchlist Review**

- Members reviewed the State Legislative Watchlist. Ms. Heitz will be sending staff information about Federal Legislation regarding accessibility to review during the next Committee meeting.

**MOTION was made by Ms. Mitchell for the PaRC to support PA [House Resolution 174](#). Ms. Joan Goodman seconded the motion. All were in favor.**

**Adjourn**

**MOTION was made by Ms. Joan Goodman to adjourn. Ms. Lynn Heitz seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.**