



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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Legislative & Public Awareness Committee Minutes for April 24, 2024

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

| | | |
|-----------------------------|-----------------------|----------------------|
| William Del Toro Vargas (P) | Julia Grant Barol (P) | Lynn Heitz (P) |
| Michele Leahy (NP) | Paul Fogle (NP) | Joan Goodman (NP) |
| Michelle Mitchell (P) | Jessica Keogh (P) | Passle Helminski (P) |
| Sylenthia Dent (P) | | |

OVR Staff Present: Chris Harbert

PaRC Staff Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA: None

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES:

MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz to approve today's agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Julia Barol seconded the motion. All were in favor.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Continued review of feedback and revisions for the State and Federal Position Papers

Recommend revised drafts for Full Council review

- Members reviewed the State and Federal Position Paper revisions.

MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz to approve the revised State Position Paper. Ms. Jessica Keogh seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Motion was made by Ms. Julia Barol to approve the revised Federal Position Paper. Ms. Lynn Heitz seconded the motion all were in favor.

Preparation for Meetings with State Legislators

Confirm meeting date/times

Legislative Offices

Talking Points

- Members reviewed potential dates for meetings with State Legislators and their staff. 5 Committee members confirmed availability to attend meetings on May 30th from 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM and May 31st from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Members requested that calendar invites for the meetings be provided to Full Council and that Full Council be re-pollled to attend for those dates.
- Members requested that State Legislators from the House of Representatives and Senate Leadership positions, Appropriations Committee, Labor & Industry Committee, and Policy Committee be provided invitation to attend these meetings.
- If Legislators provide different dates of availability, staff is to poll Committee members for those dates.
- Members requested that talking points include language from the State and Federal Position Papers, the Direct Care Worker crisis, Service Dogs, and transportation for rural areas. Members requested staff pull information from the Position Papers and Employment First Oversight Commission (EFOC) Annual Report to create a document to help keep the conversation focused on the requested talking points. Also requested highlighting the recommendations from the EFOC report. This document is to be shared with Ms. Barol to review.
- Members reviewed language included within the State Position Paper regarding the Disabilities Caucus and requested that language also be included in the talking points document. Members explained that a Disabilities Caucus would include elected officials from both parties and within the State House of Representatives and State Senate Committees to advocate and discuss disability related Legislation and funding.

Committee Goals for Fiscal Year 2024-2025

- Members reviewed current Legislative Committee goals and had no revisions.

MOTION was made by Ms. Barol to approve the Legislative Committee goals for Fiscal Year 2024-2025. Ms. Heitz seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Discussion of Potential Service Dog Language for Position Papers

- Members reviewed language regarding service dog laws and interference with service dogs that was previously removed from State law. The language includes both criminal and civil fines and/or legal action against those who harm or interfere with service animals. Members were not aware of any restrictions in supporting language or legislation that would impose fines or other criminal legal actions against those who harm or interfere with service animals. Ms. Passle Helminski reported that a letter of support was previously written by a member of the Council supporting the passing of service dog law regarding interference. Is unaware of any history that the Council can't support it and explained that this affects the employment of people with disabilities. There is not currently legislation being proposed on this matter.

- Members agreed it would be important to include language about supporting service dog legislation along with educating on the importance of service dogs relating to employment. Including an education statement within the Position Papers that states the Council supports legislation that supports all service dogs.
- Members requested staff help develop language which should include the following:
 - We support education of people in the community in regard to service dogs.
 - We want to educate everyone on the interference of service dogs and the harm that it brings to people with disabilities.
 - We need to put back into the law interference for service dogs.

State and Federal Legislative Watchlists Review

- Members reviewed 4 pieces of Federal Legislation included for discussion within the Federal Watchlist. Including, [H.R.5102](#) and [S.2522](#) *ABLE MATCH (Making Able a Tool to Combat Hardship) Act*, and [H.R.6296](#) and [S.3118](#) *HCBS Relief Act of 2023*.

MOTION was made by Ms. Michelle Mitchell to recommend support of [S.2522](#) and [H.R.5102](#) ABLE MATCH (Making Able a Tool to Combat Hardship) Act. The motion was seconded by Ms. Julia Barol. All were in favor.

MOTION was made by Ms. Michelle Mitchell to recommend support of [H.R.6296](#) and [S.3118](#) HCBS Relief Act of 2023. The motion was seconded by Ms. Julia Barol. All were in favor.

Public Comment (3 minutes per attendee)

- Ms. Sylenthia Dent inquired as Public Comment if the 15% of Federal funds that are to be allocated to the Pre Employment Transition Services is part of the \$50 million proposed budget stated within the PaRC Position Paper.
- Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR will confirm answer from OVR Leadership and provide a response to members by email.

Schedule Next Meeting

- Members agreed to hold Committee meetings on April 30th from 10:00 AM to 10:15 AM and May 20th from 11:00 AM to 12:00 PM.
- Members agreed to hold meetings with State Legislators and / or their staff on May 30th from 12:30 PM to 3:30 PM and May 31st from 9:30 AM to 12:30 PM. Staff was asked to poll all members of Full Council and track attendance.

Adjourn

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