



# Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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## Legislative & Public Awareness Committee Minutes for December 10, 2025, from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

Christie Cyktor (P)  
Passle Helminski (P)  
Michelle Mitchell (P)

Lynn Heitz (P)  
Dorian Rhodes (P)

Julia Barol (P)  
Julianna Rodrigues (P)

**PaRC Personnel Present:** Chris Todd

### CALL TO ORDER

This meeting was conducted through Zoom. Ms. Christie Cyktor called the meeting to order at 10:00 AM once quorum was established.

### ADDITIONS TO THE AGENDA

Ms. Michelle Mitchell suggested the addition of a discussion item regarding the letter from Senator Warren to the Department of Labor previously discussed during the December 9<sup>th</sup> State Board of VR meeting.

### APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

***MOTION was made by Ms. Julia Barol to approve the agenda with additions and past meeting minutes. Ms. Julianna Rodrigues seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

#### Follow Up from October 2025 Meetings with Legislators and / or their Staff

- Ms. Michelle Mitchell informed members of the December 9, 2025, State Board of VR meeting discussions regarding interest in working to develop a letter in response to Senator Warren's letter that was previously shared with the Council. Members reviewed the letter which was addressed to the current Secretary of Labor Ms. Lori Chavez-DeRemer and was written by Senator Elizabeth Warren representing Massachusetts. In it she addresses the dismantling of key disability

employment protections including Section 503, funding cuts to the Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP), along with many other concerns regarding the withdrawal of protections for workers with disabilities, apprenticeship programs, and other topics regarding employment of individuals with disabilities such as subminimum wage. Approximately 60 additional members of Congress signed on to the letter including several Representative from Pennsylvania requesting approximately 15 questions regarding these concerns be addressed by the U.S. Department of Labor (DOL) with a deadline of December 11th.

- Ms. Julia Barol and Ms. Christie Cyktor agreed to work together on drafting the letters of support to be reviewed by the committee during their January meeting. Members also determined multiple Council stakeholders and entities to include in this advocacy effort including the State Board of VR, Statewide Independent Living Council (SILC), Pennsylvania's network of Centers for Independent Living (CILs), PA Association for People Supporting Employment 1<sup>st</sup> (PA APSE), Employment First Oversight Commission, PA Disability Rights, PEAL Center, Citizen Advisory Committees (CACs), and federal organizations such as National Council on Independent Living (NCIL).
- Members reviewed follow up items from the October and November meeting with Legislators and their staff.

***MOTION was made by Ms. Passle Helminski to draft 2 letters, one supporting Senator Warren's letter and a second asking Pennsylvania's Congressional Representatives and Senators to support this effort. Ms. Julianna Rodrigues seconded the motion. All were in favor.***

### **Review State and Federal Legislative Watchlists**

- Members reviewed the State and Federal Legislative Watchlists.
- Mr. Dorian Rhodes explained it may be helpful during the next meeting to be provided with background of committee members, topics being discussed, and other information such as acronyms and organizations that are discussed. Members agreed this would be great information to share at the start of the next committee meeting scheduled for January.

### **Schedule next meeting**

- Members agreed to meet again on January 20, 2026, from 10:00 AM to 11:00 AM.

### **Adjourn**

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