



Pennsylvania Rehabilitation Council (PaRC)

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Legislative & Public Awareness Committee Minutes for February 24, 2026, from 10:30 AM to 11:30 AM

Members Present (P)

Not Present (NP)

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

Lynn Heitz (P)
Dorian Rhodes (NP)

Julia Barol (NP)
Julianna Rodrigues (P)

OVR Staff Present: Chris Harbert

PaRC Personnel Present: Chris Todd, Michelle Gerrick

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

There were no additions.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA AND PAST MINUTES

MOTION was made by Ms. Lynn Heitz to approve the agenda and past meeting minutes. Ms. Passle Helminski seconded the motion. All were in favor.

DISCUSSION AND POSSIBLE ACTION ITEMS:

Planning for Spring Meetings with Legislators

Determine Talking Points for Meetings with State and Federal Legislators

- Members agreed to update talking points to reflect current budget and funding proposals, to emphasize the importance of funding for OVR and the Centers for Independent Living (CILs), inquire if there are any updates on the recruitment and hiring of Direct Care Workers, and add the status of House Resolution 68 regarding transportation. There were no other changes and all previous talking points regarding funding, Direct Care Worker Crisis, accessible transportation, and

the subminimum wage should remain part of the information provided during scheduled meetings.

Discussion of Shared Ride Studies Report Possible Recommendations for Revisions to State and Federal Position Paper Language

- Members reviewed the Shared Ride Transportation Study Executive Summary and agreed to add a link to that document under the transportation language on the PaRC State Position Paper.
- Ms. Passle Helminski explained the importance for outreach to local Legislators regarding support for funding of accessible public transportation, para transit, and fixed routes. Seniors should not be charged for these services.
- Members discussed new processing for the way CILs are funded and requested that Council track Legislation regarding this topic to be reviewed when it is introduced into the State General Assembly.
- Members discussed importance of keeping Position Papers concise after receiving feedback from Legislative Offices. Summarized Position Papers were previously developed by the committee and will be updated and shared for review.
- Mr. Chris Harbert, OVR, provided updates regarding the State Board of Vocational Rehabilitation meeting. The State Board will be reviewing the PaRC letter of support during their next meeting. Board members continue to inform and educate regarding the Direct Care Worker (DCW) Crisis and have requested to meet with Legislators on this topic.

Schedule next meeting

- Members requested that PaRC personnel poll the committee for the next meeting to be held on the morning of either March 24 or March 25, 2026.

Adjourn

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