**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

*Friday, April 9, 2021: 10:00 – 12:00*

*Remote Meeting*

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| **Member** | **Membership Role** | **V** | **P** | **N** |
| Jeffrey Bravin | Executive Director of the American School for the Deaf or designee |  |  |  |
| Barbara Cassin | A person who is Deaf  Co-Chair |  |  |  |
| Kelly O’Connell | Educator who works with children who are Deaf or Hard of Hearing |  |  |  |
| Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn | A person who is Deaf and Blind |  |  |  |
| Colleen Hayles | Consultant Appointed by the State Board of Education in accordance with Section 10-316a or designee |  |  |  |
| Luisa Soboleski | President of the Connecticut Association of the Deaf or designee |  |  |  |
| Marlene Jacques | A health care professional who works with persons who are Deaf or hard of hearing |  |  |  |
| Sandra Inzinga | President of the Connecticut Council of Organizations Serving the Deaf or designee |  |  |  |
| MarySue Owens | An interpreting professional who serves Deaf or Hard of Hearing persons |  |  |  |
| Daniel Pinnell | Director of the CT Chapter of We the Deaf People |  |  |  |
| Amy Porter | Commissioner of Aging and Disability Services Co-Chair |  |  |  |
| Kerstin Calia | A person who is Hard of Hearing |  |  |  |
| Sheri Romblad | A parent of a student at the American School for the Deaf |  |  |  |
| Vacant | Governor's liaison to the disability community  Co-Chair |  |  |  |
| Christina Stevens | President of the Connecticut Registry of Interpreters for the Deaf or designee |  |  |  |
| Susan Yankee | A parent of a student in a predominantly oral education program |  |  |  |

Additional Guests: Representative Abercrombie and Representative Comey

Andrew Norton, Kathleen Sullivan, Khampasong Khantivong from ADS.

* Call to Order at 10:02 AM
* Welcome and Introductions
* Approval of Minutes - Motion to approve minutes by Daniel Pinnell, seconded by Lisa Flaherty Vaughn. Motion passed
* Old Business
  + Legislation –
    - Working Group - Representative Abercrombie introduced Representative Comey to the Advisory Board. Representative Comey will be assisting as cochair, for the working group Representative Abercrombie is putting forward. This is the result of meetings with the Connecticut Hospital Association around interpreters. From this meeting, it was determined that more research needed to be done around standards. The working group is set to start in August and will continue through December to get ready for the legislative session in February.
    - Mental Health Bill - Representative Abercrombie stated the language for the mental health bill was not ready, and once it came out of committee there would have been a fiscal note attached. Because of that, it would not have passed appropriations. With the working group we can work with the agencies to have more happen. Many agencies need to be involved and the workgroup allows us to set the stage to make good policy happen. We did add changing the name to include DeafBlind to the bill so it gets changed appropriately.
    - Trusted Messengers’ Vaccination Outreach - Jeff Bravin spoke about how the pandemic has highlighted and made greater the need for someone at a state level speaking for this population every day because the Deaf community is not getting the information they need.
    - Lisa Flaherty-Vaughn and Sandy Inzinga echoed Jeff’s concerns with the abundance of issues concerning the Deaf Community. In addition, Sandy mentioned that the cuts happening added to the frustration. As an active volunteer who’s working within the community, this needs to be looked at in a holistic way. There’s a need to rebuild what we had. An ADA coordinator and more Deaf people need to be involved in the system.
    - Representative Abercrombie asked for clarification on what cuts was Sandy referring to. Sandy Inzinga explained the original mental health bill involved having someone familiar with sign language, Deafness and Deaf Culture.
    - Representative Abercrombie reiterated the fact that a good bill that will make it all the way through is needed, and when people are going in to the hospital it is on the hospitals to be sure they are doing what they are supposed to make accommodations. We are not going to open an agency to do this but the agencies buy-in to help is so important and the working group will make sure people are invested to do the work needed and be able to have more to go into the next session.
    - Luisa Soboleski – In New England, CT is the only state that does not have specific Deaf and Hard of Hearing Services and it is embarrassing we do not have that any longer. She mentioned that she is retired but working full time to help. She indicated that Deaf people are frustrated, and we need to do better.
  + Barbara Cassin – DPH very interested in giving training to Deaf Community. Members struggle with VAMS and calls needed to make appointments and would like to be proactive. The state has been providing public forums, one was specifically targeted to the Deaf Community and others happening through the Independent Living Centers. There is a challenge with interpreters for appointments. FEMA has an interpreting fund and that was made known to DPH. Rep Abercrombie asked to clarify on DPH outreach – Barbara indicated it was overall for information sharing for the vaccine. FEMA is offering federal funds. RI and MA are currently offering interpreters at certain days and locations. CT could perhaps do the same in our own DEMHS regions. The community needs information beyond vaccines as well.
    - Amy Porter– encouraged the group to share the suggestions with her and she will continue to share concerns with Unified Command. She needs to get that information and recommendations from the Advisory Board in order to share what the group is specifically looking for. Rep Abercrombie and Rep Comey should be cc’ed as they may be able to help get that “ask” done. The Advisory Board needs to share information so we can help. Representative Abercrombie asked can the 5 Independent Living Centers have FEMA coordinate to do the J & J shot If something goes to DPH or ESF-15 in writing, then it would be helpful to share with Commissioner Porter to be able to tie these efforts together. Barbara Cassin indicated as there are no centralized services; we are spread out and that’s why. Representative Abercrombie indicated that is the same regardless of populations. It is being focused by “hot zones” i.e. upticks in cases and get as many sites in as many districts as possible. There has not been advanced notice to any population due to the moving nature of the pandemic. We need to know what the best areas are to set up sites for the Deaf population and distribute the information. Kerstin indicated institutions do not get say in what they get and the J & J is being used for some of this outreach, especially home to home or pop-ups, because it is a one and done and no return visit is needed. This is regardless of population. With the other vaccines the stability is an issue and need to be used in a timely manner. Remember high percentage of over 75 have been vaccinated and nursing homes have been handled well.
    - Representative Abercrombie indicated the Advisory Board has access to a Commissioner and someone who sits on the vaccine workgroup (Representative Abercrombie herself) and this is the first she had heard of these concerns. There is an ability to set up hubs but not if the information is not shared with the Commissioner and the Representative.
    - Luisa Soboleski – still stating ESF 15 communication not happening, and that there is a delay when the information is sent to DPH. Finally, a Vlog was made. Information needs to be more in depth. Feels like constantly playing catchup. We thought ESF-15 would bring to Amy and that didn’t happen.
  + Laws and Regulations Subcommittee Update – Sandra Inzinga – workgroup regarding interpreters identifying gaps – 4 areas

1. Community Interpreting needs to be in bill (this meeting, for the Governor, working within ADS, DCF etc.) need guidelines specific to those types of interpreting at state agency level.
2. Want to include Massachusetts screening/licensure as able to interpret for the Educational, legal or medical fields.
3. Interpreter standards or oversight – if agency is violating law there is nowhere to go to process grievances
4. Appropriate grievance protocol – there is none
   * + Jim Iacobellis suggested attaching to current mental health bill. Others suggested meeting with Representative Abercrombie to see if that would be appropriate. How to get interpreters paid for these meetings. Review current Human Service Advocate Position within ADS, responsible for current oversight, ADS does not have capacity to do so. Potential internal department within consumer protection if more appropriate? Human Services Committee may be able to fund the workgroup committee meetings in August.
   * Update on ESF15 - already part of the discussion above
   * Update on Alliance - Luisa Soboleski indicated already spoken about in prior agenda items.

* New Business
  + Public Comment Follow Up – Susan Yankee – one of the things brought up during public comment at a previous Advisory Board meeting was using a loop in public’ spaces like banks and grocery stores so people with hearing aids can have better access. In some places these loops are legislated to be put into any new public space/public broadcast system and is usually brought through public safety/emergency management/education/AARP/DECD. Any idea of cost? Approximately $500? People reach out to Susan if interested in learning/doing more. Many things come up through public comment so good to have a way to address these. Susan will bring to ESF-15 regarding emergency portion.
  + Hearing Specialist at 504 Meeting - Kerstin Calia – was unaware that there was an opportunity to have a hearing specialist at her son’s educational progress meetings. While her son did well it should be automatic, at least at the initial meeting, to have a hearing specialist at 504. (Able to opt out, but not have to ask for something parents may not know exists). Rep Abercrombie asked if there is statutory requirement for certain meetings. Colleen Hayles indicated 504 is different than IEP, and looks for equal access to education. Every school district is required to have available procedural safeguards for students who may have a disability, and if a student is struggling which may be due to a disability, when a 504 plan is developed an evaluation takes place. The State Department of Education is not the oversight for 504, that is under the Office of Civil Rights. Rep Abercrombie asked Colleen Hayles to send out to herself and co-chairs the process info available on 504 access.
    - Sheri Romblad to Kerstin - districts need to be held accountable and have specifically timed out meetings, quarterly or the like, to have safeguards in place. Right now, only the report is given without explanation. The only way to get more is to not sign the report until education of report is given. Parents can bring anyone to the table to get what they need in meeting.
    - Mary Sue Owens reflects back to when Connecticut had a Commission on Deaf and people knew about resources and different kinds of Deafness and speaks to next agenda items. Parents could use this to get services. All of the examples on frustrations on vaccine, oversight, etc., because there is no centralized point of support.
  + Centralized Deaf Services – Barbara Cassin – agree we have no centralized place and it is destroying the Deaf community, it could be an agency, it could be a commission but there is no central place for the Deaf community as there is for older adults and others. ADA set up against oppression of Deaf Community.
  + Luisa Soboleski - Motion for advisory board to appoint committee to propose legislation regarding the concept of creating a one stop center for services of citizens who are Deaf, DeafBlind or Hard of Hearing. Lisa Flaherty seconded. Motion passed. Commissioner Porter abstained.
* There was no public comment.
* Announcements – Christina Stevens announced that this will be her last meeting, and a new president is set to take her place. She thanks the other members of the board and the cochairs.
* Adjournment – motion to adjourn by Lisa Flaherty Vaughn, seconded by Luisa Soboleski. Meeting adjourned at 12:00.
* 2021 Meeting Schedule
  + - September 24th
    - November 5th