**BOARD MEETING MINUTES**

*Friday September 24, 2021: 10:00 – 12:00*

*Remote Meeting*

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **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 |  |  |  |
| Alycia Trakas | 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 |  |  |  |
| Vacant | A parent of a student in a predominantly oral education program |  |  |  |

*Additional Guests: Khampasong Khantivong, Jonathan Slifka, Alvin Chege from ADS*

*DMV: Commissioner Sibongile Magubone, Deputy Commissioner Tony Guerrera, Kelly O’Connell, George White.*

* Barbara Cassin called the meeting to order at 10:02 AM.
* Welcome and Introductions, Roll Call and ZOOM Housekeeping rules
* Approval of Minutes - Motion made by Jeff Bravin, seconded by Luisa Soboleski. Minutes approved by all at 10:05 AM.
* Old Business
  + Legislation – Amy moved this item to the Working Group update.
  + Membership –
    - Amy announced Colleen Hayles retired from State Board of Education (SBE). Alycia Trakas is serving in this role moving forward. Jeff Bravin asked Alycia to provide the group with background. She has been with SBE for 3 years, specializing in secondary transition as well as Learning Disabilities/SLD/Dyslexia. She is working on State Performance Plan and Annual Performance Report.
    - Amy Porter announced a vacancy as Susan Yankee has resigned. She was in the role of “parent of a student in a predominantly oral education.” Amy asked if anyone has suggestions to forward those names to her and Barbara Cassin.
    - Christina Stevens will also be transitioning off the group soon as well. Christina has announced there is no update in terms of anyone taking her place so she will remain on the board until a replacement is found.
  + Committee Update – Sandra Inzinga reported on the Working Group meetings. The Working Group has met twice with Representatives Abercrombie, Comey, and Fusco. The Working Group has 3 goals: 1) interpreting standards, 2) higher education (accreditation) and 3) mental health. In terms of legislation, the Working Group is talking about the addition of community interpreting, requirements to work in mental health settings, and clarification on the use of the MA state certifications. Additionally, there has been discussion of creating a “Standards Board”, however this was not received in a very positive manner. However, members of the Working Group continue to express their concerns that interpreters need to be monitored and overseen to make sure they are meeting the qualifications. Also, currently there is no grievance procedure for any deaf person.
  + TV Captioning Update –
    - Barbara advised that last year the Advisory Board had shared concerns and frustrations with representatives from Channels 3, 8, 30 and Fox 61. She and Jeff Bravin met with the TV stations regarding live news, weather updates etc. They were all very willing to address these issues. In the fall they are going to have a new artificial intelligence protocol to help improve captioning. In the interim, a grievance was filed with the FCC and progress is being made. Channel 3 has made great improvements in recent times. If issues continue, please get in touch with this Board or the TV stations as well. Sandy commented that nothing seems to happen until complaints are filed with the FCC because the stations commit to doing something, but they never follow through. Sandy wondered if utilizing the court system going forward may be the best option. It was further advised that there are laws in place and that diplomacy at the beginning is the best approach before more formal complaints need to be filed. Amy advised that further discussion will be necessary regarding the role of this board when complaints are filed.
* New Business
  + Working Group Update-
    - Barbara Cassin added to the report provided by Sandy Inzinga earlier in the meeting, discussing frustrations with the process of changing the interpreter law in the State. The Working Group meetings are educational and a learning process. The Standards Board, some person, entity, watchdog is very important to members of the Working Group with respect to assurances of interpreter qualifications. There is discussion about adding specifics to someone’s interpreter registration card to see if they are qualified to interpret in a specific setting. Also, there is discussion ongoing about the process of getting interpreters in emergency situations, fires, medical emergencies, etc. Also, deaf parents are challenged with how to find resources. Additionally, for individuals who become deaf later in life, it is very challenging for them to access and identify resources as well. A centralized location for resources has been suggested and will be further discussed.
    - Marysue Owens reminded everyone that when there was a Commission for the Deaf that these things were not issues, indicating that everything is scattered now. MarySue indicated that nobody really knows what the interpreting law requirements are and believes that the onus is always put on the deaf consumer to make sure that interpreters provided are qualified and on the registry. This is a lot of work for deaf people to do and is very difficult. If there are issues, where does one go to complain? There is nobody taking responsibility at this time to make sure these issues are resolved.
    - Luisa Soboleski agreed with what everyone has said that there is no standardization or consistency, indicating that the community is angry and frustrated. Also, there are many interpreters who are retiring soon and there are not enough qualified interpreters out there to take the place of those retiring. The quality of service needs to improve.
    - Sheri Romblad agreed with everyone as well. She recently was invited to an “Improving Police Interactions with the Disability Community” meeting. She has a lot of concerns that the deaf community is not being considered within their recommendations. She feels that their concerns need to be addressed throughout all agencies.
    - Luisa Soboleski added that having some centralized location within the state that could be established structurally, foundationally would go a long way to support this community.
    - Barbara Cassin thanked Luisa for making this point. She advised that $2 million from the American Rescue Plan has been provided to CT and that discussions have been had regarding a partnership with the Independent Living Centers and they are waiting for approval from the federal government as the money needs to be shared. The money should be provided to the state within 2 years.
    - Sandy Inzinga asked Amy for her perspective. Amy awaits specific recommendations from the Working Group to identify priority areas and to determine what they can do and help strategize. She advised that Alvin Chege’s role within ADS is more of an advocacy role than a monitoring role.
  + Sandy Inzinga mentioned that for the last several meetings there has been no time for public comments. She said that there are individuals in the community who are waiting for public comment opportunities to raise issues. She proposed and made a motion moving public comment prior to new business so that comments can be discussed during new business section of the meeting. Marysue Owens seconded the motion. Barbara Cassin commented that she thinks this is a great idea and advised limiting the time to 15 minutes. The motion passed unanimously. Amy Porter commented that a lot of items can be brought up during public comment. There is currently no good mechanism to determine which issues may need to be amplified and discussed on the next agenda. Amy advised that this should be something we think about as a Board as we are prioritizing the agenda items. Some issues can be addressed quickly, others take more time or may not be able to be addressed by this Board.
  + DMV Discussion – By invitation of this Board, Commissioner Magubane, Kelly O’Connell and George White provided a PowerPoint presentation on Obtaining a CDL for Deaf Drivers. The PowerPoint was provided to the group prior to the meeting and Khampasong Khantivong put a link in the chat during the meeting. Commissioner Magubane asked that when specific issues arise that they can address to please make note of them and let the Agency know. She further asked about getting the license and doctors not accepting or being willing to sign off on a waiver. Also, she would like to get information on specific people that have received the waiver. Commissioner Magubane asked where Jeff Bravin initially sent his questions. He sent them to Jim Carson at the DMV, and he has since left the Agency. George White said that part of the issue may have been the move to Federal Medical Examiners. Jeff does not recall if he applied for interstate or intrastate, he will get that information to George.
  + Sheri Romblad asked George to explain the process again regarding applying for interstate vs. intrastate and interpreters being used during an examination. The Department of Motor Vehicles believes this is only with respect to foreign language interpreters and they are waiting for clarification. In the interim, they are currently allowing sign language interpreters as this could be an ADA issue.
  + Luisa Soboleski commented that the term “hearing impaired” is no longer used.
  + Jeff Bravin advised that with regards to exams that there is a limitation with respect to the use of interpreters. Jeff offered to be helpful to the process of getting this changed.
  + Barbara Cassin said that other states seem to have an easier process. She asked what can be done to improve the process here in CT.
  + Sandy Inzinga asked about “customer-provided interpreter”. She asked if the customer needs to provide their own interpreter. George advised that his understanding is that the customer is responsible for providing their own interpreter. Sandy advised the agency is legally liable to provide the interpreter via the state contract.
  + Marlene Jacques offered to provide information regarding the state contract.
  + Marysue Owens provided further clarification, advising that DMV does contact an interpreting agency to bring in interpreters as needed. She will provide the proper information to George and the Commissioner’s Office asked to be copied on this as well.
  + Sheri Romblad asked that there be better quality audio announcements within DMV centers. The Commissioner advised she will look into this.
  + An updated PowerPoint from DMV has been sent out to members of the board.
* Additional Comments: Sandy Inzinga advised of a specific example of a state agency that does not provide access to the deaf community. She advised that communication regarding what is required by the State Agencies is not sufficient. Sandy asked Alvin if this can be worked on with DMV and other agencies. Amy Porter thanked Sandy for the comment and advised she will discuss this with Alvin further.
* Announcements-No announcements today.
* Adjournment-Jeff Bravin made the motion. Sheri Romblad seconded. Meeting was adjourned at 11:36 AM.