**Governor’s Advisory Board**

**for Persons Who are Deaf, DeafBlind, and Hard of Hearing**

**Board Meeting Minutes**

**Friday, September 20, 2024**

**10:00am-12:00pm**

**Legislative Office Building Rm 2A**

* Call to Order at 10:01 AM
* Welcome and Introductions
	+ In Attendance: Barbara Cassin, Luisa Gasco-Soboleski, Amy Porter, Jenn Proto, Ruth Ennis, Alex Pachkovsky, Renne Kleinman, Jennifer Violette, MarySue Owens, Nick Dion, Lisa Flaherty Vaughn, Melissa Dennis, Jeff Bravin, Nellie Noschese, and Kerstin Calia.
	+ Guests: SNAP Program Manager Daniel Giacomi and Director of Eligibility Policy Elizabeth Thomas from Department of Social Services (DSS).
* Approval of Minutes from April 12th, 2024
	+ Jeff Bravin motioned to accept the minutes, seconded by MarySue, motion carried.
* Old Business
	+ Update on Bureau Director
		- Commissioner Porter was able to give an update on the new Bureau Director position. ADS is thankful for the assistance of the Advisory Board’s Co-Chairs, Luisa Gasco-Soboleski and Barbara Cassin, along with Dr. Harvey Corson in the design, promotion, and future interviews on this position. The posting is now closed. Commissioner Porter is hoping to be able to share more information at the next advisory board meeting.
	+ Interpreter bill
		- Much like the creation of the taskforce in pursuit of establishing a Bureau Director position for ADS, CT Association for the Deaf (CAD) would like to propose that a similar taskforce be created regarding interpreters.
* Public Comments (limited to 15 minutes)
	+ Dr. Harvey Corson – Spoke of more recent concerns within the Deaf and interpreting community. Noticing a decline in availability of interpreters for a variety of different assignments. Thought a new approach to address this: Establish a state interpreting standards board would be the best approach, if the right people were on the board, maybe the board could address the issue in more creative ways. CAD would like to recommend establishing a task force to address the interpreter shortage, by establishing a state interpreter standards board and hopefully can be housed under the new Bureau Director/unit under ADS.
	+ Jennifer Labriola Megee- Principal at American School for the Deaf, wanted to bring up her recent experience with Jury duty, and wanted to bring some awareness. She submitted a letter to the courts about the discrimination and her experience. Luisa suggested to also reach out to DRCT for her rights being violated, specifically their CEO, Debrah Dorfman. Also suggested to reach out to Sandra Lugo Gines. Other members of the Advisory Board also shared their experience.
* New Business
* Birth to Three situation with Pediatrician
	+ Jeff Bravin brought in Paula Morabito, the Assistant Executive Director at ASD, where she oversees the Birth to Three program. Wanted to bring up an incident that happened with a multi-generational Deaf family, that was seeing a pediatrician. Pediatrician threatened to report family to DCF if child did not enroll in Birth to Three, even though the child was developing appropriately. This incident brought to light that there’s a to educate various professions on Deaf and Hard of Hearing people. Maybe this is something the new Bureau at ADS can also address.
* Luisa – shared that September is Deaf Awareness Month.
* Jeff Bravin shared video of ARPA work – [ASD Lost in Translation Training Video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qPMS74Uf6Yo)
* Luisa introduced, Jennifer White-Jackson, the new Director of Communication Advocacy Network (CAN). Jennifer started in May and is looking forward to seeing people in February to share what they have been doing.
* Information on DSS was presented by Guests: Dan Giacomi, Director of Eligibility policies, and Elizabeth Thomas, Director of Eligibility Operations (oversees DSS resource Centers). Please see attached PowerPoint for their presentation.
	+ Question and Comments: Barbara shared her experience with interpreters when working with DSS. Each facility has an ADA Liaison as well.
	+ The group discussed all the various forms of communication that DSS has to offer currently to folks who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing, or DeafBlind when they come to DSS. A few other types of communication were suggested, as well as a conversation about how the advisory board could share more information with the community on DSS’ resources regarding the ADA coordinators and the different types of interpreters available.
* Jeff Bravin made a motion to establish a taskforce on Interpreting Standards Board under the new Bureau consisting of Advisory Board members as well as Community members at large. Members of this task force would review and make recommendations on interpreting standards, or statutes that are in place to help raise the standards in CT to better accommodate individuals who are Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind. This taskforce will report back by January 3rd, 2025. This was seconded by MarySue, motion carried. For anyone interested in joining this taskforce, please reach out to the co-chairs.
* Announcement:
	+ Amy Porter: With the legislation creating the new Bureau Director position, this also means that this terminates the Commissioner’s term as a board member. Commissioner Porter still plans to attend and be supportive and expressed her appreciation the evolution of the Advisory Board and the great work we have and will continue to do.
	+ CT Association of the Deaf will be having their 85th Anniversary Celebration on Saturday November 16th at the Aqua Turf Club, in Plantsville, where they will be honoring several board members. For more information, please reach out to Luisa.
	+ Jeff Bravin shared that he met with Renee Kleinman of CT State Dept. of Education, and they will be having their first inaugural meeting again the following Tuesday, where they will be reconvening to hopefully start up work on developing language assessments. This was a bill that had been passed in 2019 but had paused due to the pandemic.
		- Jeff also would like to propose that the Advisory Board try to have DCF raise their age limit to 22, to align with the state, so that students at ASD will be able to attend the school AND still live in the dorm. Planning to discuss this in future meetings.
		- ASD will be hosing the National Autism Conference, Oct 17 – Oct 19. Co-chairs will share that information with the Board.
		- Would like to propose to the co-chairs and members of the group an option to have the meeting remote or hybrid. Would like to continue participation, however sometimes it is difficult to come in person.
		- ASD to hold their annual homecoming Oct 4th & 5th, with a ribbon cutting ceremony.
* Adjournment at 11:25 AM.
* Next meeting will be on November 8, 2024