

Maryland Commission on Caregiving

May 02, 2024

10:30 AM -12:00 PM

Virtual Meeting Minute

Commission Member Present: Chalarra Sessoms, Jennifer Eastman, Esther Ward, Trina Townsend, Patricia Morris, Yetunde Olobatuyi, Theresa Robertson, Shalini Arora, Terri Johnson

Guests: Estelle Brooks, Leslie Smith-Ray, Michael Gray, Dorinda Adams, Mark Tesoro, Teresa Jeter-Cutting, Ruth Kershner

Welcome & Introduction: Theresa Robertson, Commission Chair

Review and approval of April's minutes: Yetunde Olobatuyi

Motion to approve April's meeting Minutes: Yes

Welcome and new partners/guests (Commission Chair Theresa):

Theresa welcomed all members and guests to today's meeting and asked everyone to introduce themselves. She thanked Yetunde for all her assistance with typing and sending out the meeting minutes.

Updates on Member's Expired Term/New application: Yetunde Olobatuyi

As of today, I have not received any new information from the Governor's office regarding the renewal of expired terms. I will continue to monitor closely and will promptly notify everyone as soon as I receive any updates or guidance from the Governor's office. Thank you for your patience and understanding in this matter.

Bill Signing/Visit to Annapolis (Theresa Robertson)

Theresa reported that she had the honor of attending the bill signing ceremony in Annapolis last week, a first-time experience for her. She expressed her enthusiasm and encouraged all members to take advantage of similar opportunities, should they arise. During her visit, she had the pleasure of meeting numerous notable individuals, some of whom personally thanked her for the commission's support of SB 202. Theresa extended her gratitude to Dorinda and Jennifer for their consistent assistance and guidance throughout the legislative process, specifically acknowledging their valuable contributions to the commission's efforts on various bills. Theresa further inquired about the implementation plan for the newly signed bills, expressing her interest in understanding how they will be rolled out to facilitate easier access for caregivers. Patricia thanked everyone who has helped with the bill signing process.

Updates on longevity ready (Theresa Roberston)

Theresa provided an update on the Longevity initiative, reporting on her meeting with Mary, Leslie and Betty Romero to discuss the commission's role in the Governor's initiative. Betty requested that the commission identify two to three priorities from a caregiver's perspective, which will be submitted in a paragraph form. Theresa solicited volunteers to assist with this task and suggested using the recent caregiver survey to come up with the priorities. She emphasized the need for expedience, aiming to complete this task before the July recess. Patricia expressed interest in participating in this effort. Theresa also mentioned Kate the commission co-chair will also be interested in joining. Theresa also proposed dedicating a future meeting to discussing and finalizing the priorities.

Leslie from the Department of Aging (DOA), liaison for the Caregiver Task Force for Longevity Ready Maryland, shared her recent meeting with Betty Romero and the secretary, confirming the report's due date to the Governor in 2025. Leslie suggested submitting the commission's priorities in September, allowing sufficient time for us to meet and ensuring a thoughtful approach. She will confirm the September deadline with Betty and get back to everyone.

Need for Guest speakers to our Monthly Meeting (Theresa Robertson)

Theresa emphasized the importance of featuring guest speakers at future meetings, enhancing the commission's understanding of key issues. She mentioned extending an invitation to Senator Benson, but has yet to receive a response from her office. Theresa expressed interest in inviting additional senators, particularly one to fill the current vacancy, who shares the commission's values and goals. She hopes to hear from senators about their plans to support caregivers in Maryland.

Dorinda suggested inviting Senator Shetty from Montgomery County as a guest speaker given her role in passing SB 202 and her demonstrated commitment to this issue. Dorinda offered to follow up with Senator Benson's office and discuss potential senatorial guests with Theresa outside of the meeting. Dorinda also stated that they had about 15 organizations that worked on SB 202 with the support of the commission and Patricia organization Hands of Hope. Dorinda noted that AARP has acknowledged certain legislative limitations that may be beyond the commission's scope. Specifically, she pointed out that the budget does not allocate funds for SB 202, which is scheduled to take effect on July 1 of this year.

Announcements

Theresa suggested that upon our refund after July, the commission should direct its attention to planning activities for National Family Caregivers Month. She encouraged members to submit any proposals or ideas they may have regarding this initiative to her directly. Theresa welcomes all suggestions.

Trina reminded the commission that May is recognized as National Foster Care Month, a time to raise awareness and support for the foster care system. She highlighted the various initiatives

and events taking place across the state to promote the importance of supporting resource parents and the critical role they play in providing care and stability for foster children. Tina mentioned that kinship regulations are currently undergoing revision. She reported that they recently submitted HB 1499 and SB 0708, both of which relate to family law and kinship care. Ruth posed a question regarding the Older Americans Act of 1965 and requested resources for further information. Dorinda kindly directed her to the National Family Caregiver Support Program's for more information. Trina also offered to follow up with Ruth to ensure her questions received an accurate response.

Jennifer announced that the Administration for Community Living (ACL) within the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) has issued a final rule related to section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act. This rule prohibits discrimination based on disability in programs that receive federal financial assistance. Jennifer emphasized that this guidance is crucial for state and local governments to ensure compliance and provide accessible services for individuals with disabilities. She encouraged anyone that is interested in learning more about the section 504 to reach out to her directly. Jennifer also oversees the Attending Care Program, a state-funded financial reimbursement program that enables individuals to hire personal attendants to assist with daily tasks. Previously housed under the Department of Human Services, the program has recently undergone significant changes with the passage of SB226, signed into law by the Governor last month. This legislation expands the program's flexibility, allowing for reimbursement of additional services such as transportation (e.g., ride-sharing, meal delivery, laundry services, durable medical equipment, and repairs, as well as service animal-related expenses (e.g., food, vaccinations). The program supports individuals aged 18-64 with chronic physical disabilities, and those who enroll before age 65 can continue to receive services beyond that age. Jennifer's office is currently developing policies and procedures to implement these changes.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, June 6, 2024, from 10:30am-12 pm.