

# **Governor's Council on Blindness and Visual Impairment (GCBVI)**

## **Legislative and Public Policy Committee Meeting Minutes**

February 6, 2023

### **Attendance**

#### **Members Present**

Amy Porterfield, Chair  
Bob Kresmer  
Ed House  
John McCann  
Ted Chittenden

#### **Members Absent**

Donald Porterfield

#### **Guests Present**

Brian Dulude

#### **Staff Present**

Lindsey Powers

### **Minutes**

#### **Call to Order and Introductions**

Amy Porterfield, Chair, called the meeting to order at 1:06 pm. Introductions were made and a quorum was present.

#### **Approval of August 30, 2021 Meeting Minutes**

Amy Porterfield motioned to table the approval of the August 30, 2021 minutes. Bob Kresmer seconded the motion. The motion was passed by unanimous voice vote.

## **Governor Staff Review**

Amy Porterfield stated that Governor Katie Hobbs had new Policy Advisor positions that she wanted to review. Ms. Porterfield stated there was now a Division, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policy Advisor and a Civil Rights Policy Advisor, which would directly relate to the blindness population. Amy Porterfield stated other new Policy Advisors were for K-12, Health, Higher Education, Transportation and Human Services. Amy Porterfield stated she hoped the committee would be able to develop some talking points that she could discuss during her meeting with the DEI Policy Advisor.

## **New DES Staff Review**

Amy Porterfield stated that Angie Rogers was the new Department of Economic Security (DES) Director and was going through the Legislative Services Office for communications with the public. She noted that Lindsey Powers forwarded her contact information to be shared with Ms. Rogers as the representative of the GCBVI.

## **Policy and DES Concerns Discussion**

Amy Porterfield stated that during her meeting with the DEI Policy Advisor, she would discuss the need for accessible software and platforms and inquired whether there were still accessible issues within DES. Brian Dulude stated that when DES moved from Microsoft to Google, there were accessibility issues, although the timesheets and applications had improved. Mr. Dulude noted the Business Enterprise Program (BEP) had been trying to reduce the BEP set-aside and had been unsuccessful so far. Ed House stated his recollection that DES was also requiring individuals submit a copy of their driver's license to be considered for employment. Amy Porterfield agreed to include those items in her discussion as well as the need for accessible mail in ballots.

## **Current Legislation Review**

Ted Chittenden stated the Arizona Council of the Blind (AzCB) had discussed the issue of Independent Living training for individuals under 54 that were not interested in employment. Amy Porterfield stated that she could develop some talking points regarding that and share them with the DES Director. Ms. Porterfield noted that the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA) changed the way the Independent Living Blind (ILB) funds were distributed, which were now distributed through the Centers for Independent Living (CIL)s to Rehabilitation Services Administration (RSA). Amy Porterfield stated one issue was that the CILs did not offer specialized training to blind and visually impaired individuals. Ms. Porterfield stated that she could have a discussion regarding the Independent Living Blind (ILB) funds and whether an increase in funds could be used for all age groups. Amy Porterfield stated her understanding that

DES was not able to provide ILB training for individuals under 54, and inquired whether that would be possible. Brian Dulude agreed that RSA received funding from the CILs, which were used for individuals 54 and younger. Mr. Dulude noted that he had been meeting with the Equality Management Team, and he could inquire whether ILB training could be provided for individuals 54 and younger. Ed House stated the funding would need to be State allocated funds, rather than Federal funds. Brian Dulude stated he could check with the National Council of State Agencies for the Blind (NCSAB) also regarding ILB training. Amy Porterfield stated that she would be discussing a potential increase in ILB funding of 1 million, and she could request that the services not be limited by age group if it would be possible to provide training to individuals under 54. Bob Kresmer stated his preference that the 1 million in additional funding be allocated to individuals 55 and older. Ted Chittenden stated that Nebraska and Virginia had limited funding but were able to provide ILB services to individuals 54 and younger. Amy Porterfield stated she would contact those Directors. Amy Porterfield stated that if Brian Dulude found any information from the NCSAB, she could discuss that during her conversation, although she would need to be coordinated in what she was asking. Ed House inquired regarding the current Policy Manual and what the policy indicated. Brian Dulude stated that he could share the current Policy Manual and the State Plan, which might include that information.

John McCann stated that he was unsure regarding the status of SB 1638. Amy Porterfield stated that the bill had passed, although it lacked specific language. Ms. Porterfield stated during the National Federation of the Blind of Arizona (NFBA)s Day at the Capital, members met with Legislative staff, who had agreed to include language specifically regarding mail-in ballots that was similar to the ballots used by military stationed overseas. Brian Dulude suggested the council also discuss active participation in Arizona Participating Operators Committee (APOC) meetings. Amy Porterfield agreed and noted that she would like to invite some of the Policy Advisors to attend upcoming council meetings. Ms. Porterfield inquired regarding the status of the BEP arbitration. Brian Dulude stated that DES had been looking into the issue, and he hoped that it would not need to go to arbitration.

Amy Porterfield stated she would also discuss certifications for Braille teachers, and noted the current certification was coming from one certification body, and that all certification bodies should be included. She noted that she would also request the update of policy language to include Unified English Braille (UEB). Ed House inquired whether the Policy Manuals had been updated recently. Amy Porterfield stated her understanding that the Policy Manuals had been updated somewhat recently.

## **Agenda and Date for Next Meeting**

The next meeting of the Legislative and Public Policy Committee was scheduled for March 6th. Agenda items are as follows:

- Legislative Updates

## **Announcements**

There were no announcements.

## **Public Comment**

A call to the public was made with no response forthcoming.

## **Adjournment of Meeting**

Bob Kresmer moved to adjourn the meeting. Ted Chittenden seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned at 2:05 pm.