

# Alzheimer's Advisory Council

## Meeting Minutes

August 25, 2020

3:00-5:00 pm

Date of meeting: Tuesday, August 25, 2020

Start time: 3:00 pm

End time: 5:00 pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (WebEx)

Members participating remotely		Vote 1*	Vote 2	Vote 3
1	<b>Secretary Elizabeth Chen</b> – EOEA ( <i>chair</i> )	X	X	X
2	<b>Susan Antkowiak</b> – Alzheimer's Association - MA/NH Chapter	X	X	X
3	<b>Michael Belleville</b> – Alzheimer's Advocate	X	X	X
4	<b>Maura Brennan</b> – Baystate Health	X	X	X
5	<b>Andrew Budson</b> – VA Boston Healthcare System	X	X	X
6	<b>Robin Callahan</b> – MassHealth (ret.)	-	-	-
7	<b>Tricia Farley-Bouvier</b> – MA House of Representatives	A	X	X
8	<b>Patricia D. Jehlen</b> – MA Senate	A	-	-
9	<b>James Lavery</b> – DPH ( <i>designee of Commissioner Bharel</i> )	X	X	X
10	<b>Barbara Meehan</b> – Alzheimer's Advocate/Former Caregiver	X	-	X
11	<b>Linda Pellegrini</b> – UMass Memorial Medical Center	-	X	X
12	<b>Heather Sawitsky</b> – Fox Hill Village Homeowners Corp.	X	X	X
Members not in attendance				
13	<b>Jonathan Jackson</b> – MGH	-	-	-
14	<b>Rhiana Kohl</b> – Caregiver	-	-	-
15	<b>Hector Montesino</b> – Alzheimer's Advocate	-	-	-
16	<b>James Wessler</b> – Alzheimer's Association	-	-	-
17	<b>Bernice Osborne-Pollar</b> – Caregiver	-	-	-

\* (X) Voted in favor; (O) Opposed; (A) Abstained from vote; (-) Absent from meeting or during vote

### Proceedings

Secretary Chen called the meeting to order at 3:00 pm. She welcomed members and noted that all votes taken during the meeting would be conducted via roll call.

**Vote 1 to approve the 2/25/2020 minutes:** Secretary Chen requested a motion to approve the minutes from the Council's last meeting on February 25, 2020. Dr. Budson introduced the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Lavery and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

Secretary Chen facilitated a discussion with members regarding the impact that the COVID-19 pandemic has had on the work of the Council. During the discussion, members raised the following points:

- **Increased stress and accelerated physical and mental declines due to isolation.** Dr. Budson noted that in mild and moderate stages of dementia in particular, the stress of the pandemic and isolation are causing significant trauma to patients. He described a program his team is piloting in which individuals with mild stage dementia living at home receive a 20-minute phone call several times a week from trained callers to help combat feelings of isolation among isolated residents. Dr. Budson shared an interactive map from the Massachusetts Healthy Aging Collaborative ([link](#)) that displays the percent of people age 65+ living with Alzheimer's Disease or Related Dementias (ADRD) across the state.
- **Increased stress among caregivers** resulting from decrease in at-home support and lack of day programs to provide caregivers moments of respite. Members noted that elevated level of stress among caregivers has been reflected in the dramatic increase in calls to helplines over the past several months. Members noted that a lack of awareness among caregivers regarding existing supports would be worthwhile to address.
- **Access to technology in underserved communities.** Members noted that this lack of access has exacerbated isolation among those most vulnerable.
- **Need to rethink communal spaces** initially designed to aid interaction, but which now may need to be reevaluated. Ms. Sawitsky highlighted the "greenhouse model" as a specific example.
- **Underutilized workforce.** Members highlighted the potential for unemployed or recently retired caregivers as an untapped resource for care, as they have already undergone background checks and could potentially fill an urgent need for support with minimal trainings.

Summarizing themes from the group's discussion, Rep. Farley-Bouvier and Secretary Chen noted that caregiver support has emerged as an urgent priority for the Council. Members discussed potential solutions to provide some form of respite to caregivers who may be experiencing high rates of burnout during the pandemic due to lack of day programs for their family members and clients experiencing dementia.

**Vote 2 to approve motion for Council to support caregivers during the pandemic:** Secretary Chen requested a motion to vote on an additional charge for the Council, with the aim of supporting caregivers during the pandemic, including those within institutional settings. Representative Farley-Bouvier introduced a motion, which was seconded by Mr. Belleville and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

Ben Wood, DPH Director of the Division of Community Health Planning and Engagement, presented on the proposed Massachusetts Building Our Largest Dementia Infrastructure (BOLD) Initiative. He noted that his team prepared a grant proposal submitted to the CDC based on a recommendation from the Council's Caregiver Support Workgroup. Director Wood noted that the grant was submitted to the CDC in May 2020, with decision expected in September 2020. The proposal includes development of a public health working group. For additional details, refer to the presentation on the Alzheimer Advisory Council's [Meeting Materials – August 25, 2020 webpage](#).

Secretary Chen proposed that due to limited time, the presentation on the status of progress on the dementia-related requirements of Chapter 220 of the Acts of 2018 be postponed for the Council's October 2020 meeting, which would also include a presentation from the Physical Infrastructure Workgroup.

Summary of action items / priorities

1. Council to explore initiatives to address caregiver support as an urgent priority.
2. Planned update on the status of the dementia-related requirements in Chapter 220 of the Acts of 2018 postponed until the Council's October 27 meeting.

**Vote to adjourn:** Secretary Chen requested a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Belleville introduced the motion, which was seconded by Ms. Meehan and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

The meeting was adjourned at 5:00 pm.