

CRT & Wheelchair Repair Advisory Council

MINUTES

Wednesday, May 28, 2025

11:00 AM Zoom Remote Meeting Broadcast On Zoom and YouTube Live

Attendees: Maureen Amirault (Co-Chair), Farrah Garland, Becki Jacobson (OHA), Ginny Mahoney, David Morgana, Diane Racicot (NSM), Darrell Roupp, Joe Shortt, Shirley Skyers-Thomas, Jonathon Slifka (ADS, Co-Chair), and Sheldon Toubman (Disability Rights CT).

Absent: Jim Carson (CID), Nina Holmes, Michelle Johnson, Brittany Kane, David Seifel,

Guests: Gary Gilberti (NuMotion), Mary Ann Langston (Self-Advocate).

- I. CONVENE MEETING: Co-Chair Amirault called the meeting to order at 11:07 AM.
- II. REMARKS BY THE CHAIRS: Amirault expressed appreciation to the members for the timely submission of information for the agenda and of reports for circulation prior to the meeting. She reminded members that minutes are not to be considered a transcript of the meeting, and expressed her appreciation for the staff support of the meeting and the generation of thorough minutes. Co-Chair Slifka reminded everyone of the "hard stop" for the meeting at 12:30 PM because of other commitments of members.

Council Administrator Breanne Clifton was asked to provide a report of the status of legislation of interest to the Council. Clifton reported that HB 7106 AN ACT CONCERNING WHEELCHAIR REPAIR REQUIREMENTS has passed the House as amended (A) and is now headed to the Senate and then pursuant to the signature of the Governor will become law. SB 1251 AN ACT IMPLEMENTING THE GOVERNOR'S RECOMMENDATIONS CONCERNING A DRIVER TRAINING PROGRAM FOR PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES, LEGISLATIVE OVERSIGHT OF MEDICAID STATE PLAN AMENDMENTS AND PENALTIES FOR VIOLATING TIMELY WHEELCHAIR REPAIR STANDARDS has not yet been taken up by the Senate, but will need to be taken up within the week to successfully pass.

- III. APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Co-Chair Slifka assumed the Chair while technical difficulties were resolved.

- a. MOTION: to approve the minutes of February 19, 2025, as circulated with suggestions submitted by members prior to the meeting, made by Mahoney, seconded by Jacobson. Motion carried.
- b. MOTION: to approve the minutes of March 26, 2025, as circulated, made by Jacobson, seconded by Garland. Motion carried.

Amirault reassumed the Chair.

- IV. NUMOTION REPORT: Chair Amirault invited Gilberti to discuss the monthly report submitted by Numotion. Gilberti reported 80% compliance for the month of April on completed WC repairs (predicts aggregated to 85% for May based on figures to date). They continue to strive for 100% compliance and are making changes in their process to do so. Numotion is stocking 70 of the most common parts that are immediately available, thereby reducing the wait for ordering parts. Gilberti reported they are using seven technicians, plus one additional technician pulled in from NY state as needed. Toubman requests specifying FTE to assist in evaluating across providers. Gilberti estimates FTE of 9-9.1. Numotion's written report summarized their commitment to improvement in compliance by assigning a tech from NY state to improve output, a new hire that completed training on May 15, and the effort to keep one tech in the shop and seven in the field.
- a. Amirault asked about the success rate of remote assessments. Gilberti discussed the likelihood that only the primary problem is identified by remote, making it a common occurrence that additional issues may be identified upon in-person inspection.
 - b. Toubman asked for clarification regarding the date ranges of the reporting submitted. Gilberti reports as of the end of April, whereas Racicot reports on behalf of NSM for a portion of the month of May (April 19-May 16).
 - c. Morgana asked about more precise explanations for delays in repair completion based in his own experience of multiple delays to repairs in the past few months since enactment of PA-24-58. Gilberti apologized for the delays and committed to reviewing Morgana's situation personally to assure his satisfaction.
 - d. Shortt indicated he likes the option of remote assessments, even with the potential of identifying only one of several existing problems; at least it gets the process going. Gilberti commented it works well to ID the immediate issue. Numotion is working to put more experienced staff on the phones to increase accuracy.
 - e. Racicot interjected that 24-27% of visits discover additional issues during an in-person session, which is very common. This may be an indication for providing coverage for preventive maintenance. At the very least, the repair of the identified issue can often "get the person moving" even if additional repairs are needed.
 - f. Gilberti reported a total of 352 repair in April (higher than January, February, or March) and their backlog has been halved within the last few months.
 - g. Toubman noted that preventive maintenance has been amended out of the bill under consideration.
 - h. Roupp reported that he had successful repairs recently with NSM, although he/his insurance paid for all parts, including several extra parts that were not needed for the current repair. The parts were retrieved and returned by the tech but no reimbursement was forthcoming. He believes if he were able to retain those parts, which he paid for, he could potentially use them for future self-repairs. Three emails to the company have remained unanswered. Racicot indicated she will follow-up to assure resolution.
- V. NSM REPORT: Chair Amirault invited Racicot to discuss the monthly report submitted by National Seating & Mobility (NSM). Racicot reported NSM completed 329 repairs to date during the reporting period (April 19-May 16), with compliance of 90.5% (number will be corrected in the report). Continue to report 4.1 days of response time, not meeting the compliance goal of 1 day. In terms of staffing, NSM has lost 2 technicians and has 1 new hire in training (8-week process). NSM's written report lists improvements made to increase compliance including an administrative account executive for tracking and scheduling, a dedicated specialist for entry of orders and managing quotes, and use of a

centralized call center designed to enhance the response rate and effectively manage the call volume.

- a. Morgana asks when an appointment is canceled, is there an effort made to "fill in" additional appointments in the same area. Racicot reports they attempt to do so, but success depends on the time available, indicating it may be more likely to complete an additional assessment rather than a repair.
- b. Toubman pointed out the differences in reporting timeframes between the two companies and recommended that they each report on complete months rather than spanning 30 days across months, allowing better comparisons. Racicot agreed to adjust NSM reporting to a monthly schedule. NSM has 11 staff "on the road," one in the shop, and one in training, pointing out that NSM has only one more FTE than Numotion currently.
- c. Gilberti noted Numotion's improvements in production, with outstanding orders currently number in the mid-300s when that list has been as high as >700. They expect to eliminate the back log in the near future. Currently the median of completion is 22 days, whereas just a year ago it was almost 40 days, indicating the degree of progress.
- d. Amirault asked about the impact of increasing the number of parts being maintained in inventory. Racicot reported that has been a substantial improvement and they have automated the re-order process of common parts to maintain the inventory as soon as a part is used.
- e. Garland spoke to their belief that the goal of all partners, providers, and users/customers involved in this process is a commitment to serving the needs of WC users. These issues affect real lives, and we can be unified in our efforts to reach that goal.
- f. Gilberti expressed the commitment to providing service to customers and Numotion is working hard and investing in meeting the levels of compliance within the law (see Numotion report above).
- g. Amirault expressed appreciation for the efforts and the progress that is being made.

VI. OHA UPDATE: Chair Amirault invited Health Advocate Jacobson to discuss the recent activities of OHA. Five complaints were received in April and thus far in May, and included issues related to joy sticks, batteries, and footrest placement. The website has been updated, although the new reporting form is not fully implemented. OHA had productive discussions with both providers that are currently reporting to the Advisory Council and HIPAA forms have been developed for each company to allow OHA to move forward with escalating a response to cases as they come to their attention.

- a. Ruopp mentioned the potential need for additional companies to begin reporting to show evidence of compliance or measures being used to move toward compliance. One that was mentioned is "Journey Company." The group's assumption was that ALL companies involved in the WC repair market should be reporting their compliance with PA-24-58.
- b. Morgana asked about education regarding compliance. Jacobson reported that she is talking about these issues at all community events and speaking engagements. The new website will draw attention to this as well. OHA will continue to work to increase provider and public awareness.

VII. ADDITIONAL BUSINESS AND DISCUSSION: Chair Amirault introduced self-advocate Mary Ellen Langston and read a statement on her behalf. Langston received a newly ordered WC that did not meet her needs and resulted in falls and injuries. Amirault

mentioned that Langston apparently is caught between the ATP & Seating company and a repair company, believing she may need to start the process over to achieve resolution.

- a. Gilberti mentioned, as a former ATP Seating specialist, he believes the responsibility lies with the initial provider until the new equipment is adjusted properly and meets the clients needs. He committed to working directly with Langston to assist her in resolving the issues with her WC. Langston expressed her appreciation.

VIII. ANNOUNCEMENT OF TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING: the next meeting TBD as soon as is practical after the closing of the legislative session. Racicot mentioned she will be at a national event and have limited availability during the week of June 23. Gilberti agreed that he would not be available during that week, as well.

IX. ADJOURNMENT: MOTION to adjourn made by Racicot, seconded by Mahoney. Motion carried.

Breanne Clifton

Rebecca McClanahan

Council Administrator

Minutes Prepared by Asst. Clerk