

Report on the Interim Activity of the Virginia Disability Commission 2020

Members

Legislative Members:

Delegate Kaye Kory, Chair
Senator Barbara A. Favola, Vice Chair
Delegate Dawn M. Adams
Delegate Patrick A. Hope
Delegate Robert D. Orrock, Sr.
Senator Ghazala F. Hashmi

Citizen Members:

Conner Cummings
Teresa Elder
Amy Laufer
John Tolleris
John Toscano

Staff:

Anna Moir, Attorney, Division of Legislative Services
Julia Carlton, Attorney, Division of Legislative Services

Website:

<http://dls.virginia.gov/commissions/vdc.htm>

BACKGROUND

The Virginia Disability Commission is the legislative body charged with identifying and recommending legislative priorities and policies for adoption or examination by the General Assembly in order to provide ongoing support in developing and reviewing services and funding related to Virginians with disabilities.

OVERVIEW

The Virginia Disability Commission did not meet before October 1, 2020. However, the Commission met during the 2020 interim on December 22, 2020 at 1:00 p.m. The summary for that meeting is attached.

Website:

<http://dls.virginia.gov/commissions/vdc.htm>

Virginia Disability Commission

December 22, 2020 at 1:00 p.m.

Electronic Meeting

<https://studies.viriniageneralassembly.gov/studies/262>

The Virginia Disability Commission (the Commission) met electronically with Delegate Kaye Kory, chair, presiding.¹ The meeting began with the election of the chair and vice chair followed by discussion among members of the Commission. Materials from the meeting are accessible through the [Commission's website](#).

Comments by the Chair and Vice Chair

Upon the election of Delegate Kaye Kory as chair of the Commission, Delegate Kory made opening remarks and stated that she would like the report by the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Commission (JLARC), based on its review of K–12 special education services, to guide the Commission's work. After the chair conducted the vice chair election, the elected vice-chair, Senator Favola, stated that through the Commission's work she hopes to solicit input from individuals and groups who have experienced challenges in special education and build upon virtual education developed through the COVID-19 pandemic to create state-of-the-art approaches for special education in the Commonwealth.

Discussion: Use of the Word "Handicapped" in the Code of Virginia

Delegate Patrick A. Hope presented his desire, based upon a request from the City of Alexandria, to request a budget amendment in the 2021 General Assembly Session directing the Disability Commission and the Virginia Code Commission to study whether the words "handicapped" and "handicap" should be changed to "disabled" and "disability," respectively, or to other words or phrases, in the Code of Virginia. The Commission unanimously voted in favor of Delegate Hope's requesting such budget amendment.

Training for Judges on Understanding and Recognizing Intellectual Disabilities

Delegate Kory presented her desire to provide training for judges that helps support them to better understand and recognize the disabilities of individuals who appear before a court. Delegate Kory also stated her intention that a work group be created to develop digital modules for judges. The Commission unanimously voted in favor of the chair writing a letter to the Office of the Executive Secretary of the Supreme Court of Virginia to express the Commission's interest

¹ **Members Present:** Delegate Kaye Kory (chair), Senator Barbara A. Favola (vice chair), Delegate Patrick A. Hope, Delegate Dawn M. Adams, Senator Ghazala F. Hashmi, John Toscano, Conner Cummings, Teresa Elder, Amy Laufer, John Tolleris

Members Absent: Delegate Robert D. Orrock, Sr.

Website:

<http://dls.virginia.gov/commissions/vdc.htm>

in creating such training and working with the Office to determine how to jointly approach preparing such information and training for judges.

Member Comments

The final portion of the meeting consisted of member comments regarding the Commission's work. Among such comments, Senator Hashmi stated that she is currently looking into an issue related to compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act in cabins at parks and recreational facilities in the Commonwealth and that she will report back with information to the Commission. Conner Cummings presented issues that he hopes the Commission will address in its work based on his conversations with individuals who are both on the spectrum and with other disabilities, as well as associations, attorneys, counselors, and others who work with people with disabilities. In other comments, members made suggestions for speakers to present to the Commission in future meetings and other suggestions related to the Commission's work.

Website:

<http://dls.virginia.gov/commissions/vdc.htm>