

Katie Hobbs
Governor



Nikki Soukup
Interim Director

Arizona Commission

for the deaf and the hard of hearing

100 N 15th Avenue □ Suite 104 □ Phoenix, AZ 85007
acdhh.org

**Minutes from the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the
Hard of Hearing, Special Board Meeting.
Meeting held February 20th, 2025 at 4:30 pm.
The meeting was held via Zoom Teleconference.**

Call to Order & Roll Call

Commissioner Sienko called the meeting to order at 4:43 PM.

Commissioners present: Catherine Sienko, Randal Kidd, Harvey Goodstein, Diana Herron, Virginia Thompson, Fred Williams, Melanie O'Rourke, Sarah Bolmarcich, Debbie Venkatesh, Scott Madsen, Andrew Cohen

Commissioners absent: Jennifer Scarboro

AAG: Elise Phalen

Staff Present: Nikki Soukup, Sue Kay Kneifel, Carmen Green Smith, Victoria Vaughn, Chyla Dalton-Nava

Approval of Minutes from February 4th Meeting

Commissioner Herron moved to approve the minutes from the February 4th meeting, Commissioner Bolmarcich seconded, the motion carried unanimously.

Chair's Report

Chair Sienko opened the meeting by updating the board that they would be voting on future meeting dates for 2025, and that she'd like the board to take some time to think about whether they would prefer to continue to meet virtually, or if they'd like to look into hybrid or in person meetings in the future.

Interim Director's Report

Nikki Soukup began her update by recognizing Sherri Collins 27 nearly years of service as the agency's executive Director, and congratulated her on her new role as the Executive Director of Deaf Seniors of America. During the interim period, Nikki will focus on continuing with the agency's strategic plan, and work to provide stability to the agency. In the Governor's Executive budget, ACDHH is proposed to receive the same amount of funds that were appropriated last year, at \$5,470,800. ACDHH requested additional funds for the support service provider program for the DeafBlind community, and this was not included in the appropriated funds. The agency will now look for legislators to support our ask, and include funding in the final package before the end of the legislative session. She highlighted a few of the events that the agency has been involved in during the last quarter such as the HLA Walk 4 Hearing event, which had over 400 participants and raised over

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The mission of the Arizona Commission for the Deaf and the Hard of Hearing is to ensure, in partnership with the public and private sectors, accessibility for the deaf, deaf-blind, hard of hearing, and persons with speech difficulties to improve their quality of life.



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\$40,000. ACDHH also partnered with the Arizona Burn Foundation to distribute free smoke alarms to the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind community in Prescott and Prescott Valley.

Legislative Update

Nikki continued with the legislative update. She announced the first Meet the Legislature event specifically for the Deaf Blind Community taking place on March 5th. This event will be the first of its kind, and we are eager to see what kind of engagement and awareness can result from this event for the DeafBlind community. She also discussed a recent meeting she attended with the Arizona Disability Coalition and Congresswoman Yassamin Ansari. During this meeting, the group discussed key issues that are being watched at the federal level. Such as: potential Medicaid cuts, changes to Social Security, and changes to the Department of Education. The group will continue to monitor these issues and advocate at the federal level. She encouraged any in the community who may be directly impacted by any of these potential changes to reach out to ACDHH so that their stories can be shared on our platforms.

Future Meeting Dates/Locations

Chair Sienko reminded the Board of the dates suggested for the 2025 meetings: May 15th, August 14th, November 6th, and February 19th, 2026. A discussion followed on meeting types, with some commissioners wishing to have a few in person options, and others preferring remote options. Some commissioners expressed the desire to have at least one meeting in person outside of the metro Phoenix area. They discussed logistical issues and also some of the costs associated with holding in person meetings with Sue Kay Kneifel, the agency Business Manager. **Commissioner Herron moves to accept the meeting dates of May 15th, August 14th, November 6th, and February 19th via Zoom, while at the same time continuing to review logistics of having an offsite meeting. If the board decides to have a meeting offsite, they will choose one of these dates to do so; Commissioner Cohen seconds the motion, the motion carries unanimously.**

DeafBlind Ad Hoc Committee Update

Commissioner Cohen discussed his previous recommendations to establish an Ad Hoc committee to review the process of DeafBlind interpreting requests, to help identify any gaps in the process. A discussion ensued, and Elise Phalen stated that if the board's goal was simply to do research and present its findings to the board, it is fine to proceed. However, if the end goal would be for the board to potentially make any recommendations for action to the board, the Assistant Attorney General would need to participate in these meetings. Commissioner Cohen clarified that he would like to just review the process at this point, and then if there were any changes that needed to be made, he would bring that back to the full board. A discussion followed. A few of the commissioners were not familiar



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with the original complaint, so Chyla located the original meeting where this meeting was first discussed, August 15th 2024. Victoria Vaughn also stated that there is now a standard of practice that outlines the agency's current procedures for securing interpreters for DeafBlind consumers. Both of these documents will be sent over to the commissioners to review, and then Commissioner Cohen will follow up with ACDHH staff to begin the process of formally reviewing the Deafblind request procedure.

Interpreter Complaint Process Update

Chair Sienko explained that this agenda item is about the commission's ability to expand the scope of the current Interpreter Licensure Committee's duties to include the review of interpreter complaints. This would free up some of the time the full board has been using to discuss interpreter complaints during the quarterly board meetings. **Commissioner Madsen moved to go into closed session to discuss the options the board has for allowing the ILC to handle interpreter complaints; Commissioner Herron seconds the motion, the board moves into closed session at 5:50 PM.**

The board returns at 6:29 PM.

Quorum was reestablished by roll call, all members are present. **Commissioner Cohen moves that all interpreter complaints first go through the Interpreter Licensure Committee for review, and then go to the full board of commissioners for a final decision. Commissioner Thompson seconds the motion.** A discussion followed, with **Commissioner Kidd moving that the item be tabled to give Elise the time to address the concerns that the board had discussed in closed session.** A discussion followed. **Commissioner Kidd withdraws his motion to table the discussion.** The commissioners continue the discussion. **Commissioner Bolmarcich moves to amend Commissioner Cohen's motion for the ILC to begin reviewing complaints received after February 21st, 2025; Commissioner Herron seconds the motion, the amendment carries unanimously.**

The board now votes on the original motion to allow the Interpreter Licensure Committee to review all interpreter complaints received after February 21st, 2025, and the final decision on these complaints will be made by the full board of commissioners. The vote was taken by roll call with commissioners voting:

O'Rourke: Aye

Madsen: Aye

Herron: Aye

Kidd: Aye

Thompson: Aye

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Williams:Aye
Swenson:Aye
Venkatesh: Aye
Cohen:Aye
Bolmarcich:Aye
Goodstein: Aye
Sienko: Aye

The motion carries unanimously. Commissioner Cohen left the meeting at 7:00 PM.

The board went on a break at 7:01 PM.

The board returned at 7:11 PM

Quorum was reestablished by roll call.

ADA Training AZ State Legislature

Nikki Soukup discussed a recent experience Annette Reichman, the current Superintendent at ASDB had at the Arizona State Legislature where there were issues related to a lack of accommodations, and this showed the need for ADA training for ADA training at the AZ Legislature. A discussion followed on what options were available, especially in today's political climate. **Commissioner Herron moves that Nikki Soukup follows up with the State Legislature to set up ADA training for representatives, and provide a report at the next meeting; Commissioner Kidd seconds the motion, the motion carries unanimously.**

ACDHH/DCS Partnership

Commissioner Scarborough, who was unable to attend tonight's meeting requested this agenda item due to previous issues with the provision of accommodations by DCS to Deaf parents with Hearing children. Nikki was able to share that ACDHH will be providing training to DCS in the near future, and that agency staff is currently working with the DCS resource coordinator/cultural competency coordinator.

CART Provider Shortage

Commissioner Bolmarcich noted that she's seen a shortage in in person CART providers, and she would like the agency to look into this shortage. **Commissioner Bolmarcich moves that the Hard of Hearing Subcommittee look into the CART provider shortage in the state and prepare a report to present to the full board; Commissioner Herron seconds the motion.** A discussion follows. Commissioner O'Rourke clarifies her role in serving on the agency's Hard of Hearing Task force, and that this Task force is not part of the Board of Commissioners. **Commissioner Bolmarcich amends her motion to move that the Board request Michele Michaels, the Hearing Healthcare Program Manager,**

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Christy Abrams, the Hard of Hearing Specialist, look into the issue of whether there are in-person CART providers shortages in the Phoenix area and the State, and prepare a report to give to the Board at the next meeting; Commissioner O'Rourke seconds the motion, the motion carries unanimously.

Future Agenda Items

Commissioner Goodstein would like to see a report on the availability of caregivers for the Deaf, Hard of Hearing and DeafBlind senior community added to the agenda.

Adjournment

Commissioner Kidd moves to adjourn the meeting at 7:47 PM, Commissioner Sienko seconds the motion, the meeting is adjourned at 7:47 PM.

The undersigned certifies that a copy of the attached notice was duly posted this

25th day of February, 2025 at 5:00 pm by Chyla Dalton-Nava, Assistant to the Executive Director.