

ABLE Advisory Committee Meeting

2:00pm August 15, 2017

The Office of the State Treasurer, 7th Floor, 55 Elm Street, Hartford CT

In attendance

Deputy Treasurer Lawrence Wilson

Kevin Lawton, DDS

Jack Frost

David Guttchen, OPM

Toni Fatone, DAS

Linda Blackburn

Bill Pierce, DMHAS

Jessica Carol, on behalf of Marc Shok

Kerry Tedford-Coles

Mary Phil Guinan, OTT

Emily Bjornberg, OTT

Lydia Neals, OTT

By Phone

Commissioner Amy Porter

The meeting was called to order at 2:05pm.

Larry Wilson gave opening remarks and asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Linda Blackburn made a motion to accept the minutes. David Guttchen seconded the motion. The motion passed unanimously.

The committee discussed the progress that has been made since the official recommendation was made from the Committee to the Treasurer. In May the committee advised the Treasurer that Nebraska and Oregon be considered as finalists.

Kerry Tedford-Coles mentioned that the Treasurer had phone calls with both finalists yesterday which went well. She appreciated the presentations and felt strongly that we have the ability to work well with Oregon.

Lawrence Wilson reported that The Treasurer is leaning towards Oregon but has asked for some additional due diligence on the part of her staff before making a final decision.

Mary Phil Guinan stated that the Treasurer felt strongly that Oregon is the leader at this point, but we are unable to announce that as a committee before we perform all required due diligence.

Jack Frost reported on a phone call he had directly with Oregon as the parent of a child with disabilities.

Toni Fatone mentioned that she had been in touch with Maryland. She recommended approaching the Oregon program through the lens of what worked with other partnering states.

Kevin Lawton asked several questions about qualifying beneficiaries.

Mary Phil Guinan lead a discussion regarding the possibility of a tax deduction. Several committee members asked about the likelihood of a deduction in Connecticut and it was widely agreed that tax deductions would not be on the table for at least 6-8 years.

Kerry Tedford-Coles highlighted the discussion from yesterday's phone calls in regards to investment fund flexibility in Oregon.

Jack Frost mentioned that the ability to be flexible on investments would be an attraction for Connecticut.

Lawrence Wilson mentioned that our program should never be seen as disadvantageous for CT residents vs. national programs.

Bill Pierce mentioned that we need to protect spenders and savers both. He predicts that the majority of DMHAS clients would be spenders.

Mary Phil Guinan initiated a discussion about "train the trainer" workshops that could be performed by both Oregon and Nebraska. Her question involved how long these workshops would take and how supportive the disability community would be.

Kevin Lawton suggested that "train the trainer" series of workshops would last two weeks at a minimum after which we would need to immediately launch a public messaging campaign.

Toni Fatone commented that all outreach should be proactive so that communities know ahead of time when we are coming to discuss ABLE.

It was widely agreed by the committee that a CT-specific program should be launched by December, 2017. This would result in more residents taking advantage of the federal tax deduction and then potentially more accounts being opened.

Mary Phil Guinan proposed applying for federal grants or non-profit dollars to float the CT ABLE program. Other committee members felt as though ABLE would not be a high priority for these sources.

Jack Frost mentioned that he had attended two webinars at the National ABLE Resource Center. Each lasted an hour and a half and detailed account openings from beginning to end. He found these to be helpful and would recommend them to other parents.

Bill Pierce explained to the committee that train the trainer works quite well in Connecticut. As long as we develop "ABLE Champions" who advertise the program with enthusiasm, we will reach our intended audience.

Kevin Lawton asked for clarification on what job titles within each agency were trained by the "train the trainer" modules.

Marina Dermon raised the issue of saturation. It is important that all CT families with disabilities are given the information to start an ABLE account.

Jack Frost asked if a tax deduction could be explored. He also asked that we have a central location on the web for Connecticut ABLE. This could be at DDS, OTT, or DAS.

Mary Phil answered Jack by saying that the initial site would be housed at OTT and could be linked to myriad other state sites.

The next meeting is scheduled for September 19, 2017.

David Guttchen made a motion to adjourn. Kerry Tedford-Coles seconded the motion which passed unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 3:15.