



**STATEWIDE INDEPENDENT LIVING COUNCIL**  
**February 25, 2026**  
**2:30pm**  
**Advocacy Committee Meeting**  
**ZOOM**

**Members Attending:** Andrew Harmon (Committee Chair), Ryan Witterschein (Council Chair), Ryan Donnelly, Joshua Gehling, Isadora Rodriguez-Legendre, and Herb Carpenter

**Staff:** Jennifer Beaulieu (NH SILC Assistant)

Committee Chair Andrew Harmon called the meeting to order at 2:32pm.

**Review of Minutes from Meeting**

**\*Ryan Donnelly moved to approve the minutes**

**Second:** Andrew Harmon

**Discussion:** None

**All in Favor:** Yes    **Abstaining:** Joshua Gehling (Not in attendance during motion)

**Motion Carried**

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**SPIIL Goal Review**

**a. Goal 1 Objectives**

Andrew Harmon noted that the main challenge with the Goal 1 objectives is identifying which agencies already exist, since gaps can't be understood without that information. The group discussed ways to map available services, and Joshua Gehling commented that the effort feels similar to recreating 211 or ServiceLink. Ryan Donnelly suggested surveying the disability community to understand their needs and why they may not be hearing about resources, though he recognized it would be a major undertaking. Andrew Harmon added that Part B vendors conduct annual surveys and proposed adding questions to identify service gaps. When Ryan Donnelly asked what those surveys include, Andrew suggested bringing in someone from the Governance Committee who knows the specifics.

Ryan Witterschein mentioned that he was able to create a 15-page document that compiles all the sources in NH for independent living. He shared it with Andrew Harmon. He mentioned that it could be placed on the SILC website and that would accomplish a lot of what needs to be done. Joshua Gehling noted that he feels that it

would help address some of the gaps with getting information out to people but feels it's hard to know about the gaps without asking people what the gaps are.

Jennifer Beaulieu mentioned the idea of doing a literature review of what's out there for service gaps. She also mentioned how we gathered some information on service gaps during the SPIL public input sessions. She will share the notes from those sessions.

Andrew Harmon mentioned that in terms of transportation there is a community needs assessment that has been going on, they have just concluded their information gathering stage and now they are in the process of trying to analyze that data. He thinks that information might be helpful, but it probably won't be available until the summer months.

**b. Goal 4/Objective 4.3 Discussion**

The committee reviewed the previously shared PowerPoints and videos on benefits counseling and discussed their impressions during the meeting. Joshua Gehling noted overlap in referenced work incentives across presentations but felt each offered useful distinctions: Deana Johnson's included specific examples, GSIL provided a strong process overview, and VR offered detailed information on incentives such as the Ticket to Work program. Several presenters, including Stephanie Choi and Michelle Cutting, have since left their positions; Michelle Cutting's PowerPoint still lists her contact information. Andrew Harmon asked who filled Michelle Cutting's role, and Ryan Donnelly said he believes the position is still in the interview phase and will confirm with Deborah Ritcey during his meeting on Friday.

Discussion ensued on how we present all the information to the public. Joshua Gehling mentioned the idea of having the information on the website. There were questions about what the website is capable of and the memory limit of uploads on the website. Jennifer Beaulieu noted that videos could be embedded onto the website and the SILC has a YouTube channel that hasn't been used since she first started working for the SILC. An idea was mentioned to combine the success stories that are gathered from the other Goal 4 objectives with the benefits counseling presentations. Joshua Gehling mentioned the idea of having presentations, pamphlets, or brochures for different populations like VR clients being directed to a VR benefits counselor or an area agency client being directed to their area agency's benefits specialist. He mentioned the idea of breakout rooms for virtual benefits counseling sessions where individuals will go to the breakout room that fits their needs and what agencies they are already receiving services from.

Discussion ensued on the logistics of hosting the session. Should it be virtual or in-person with a virtual component? When should it occur? Isadora mentioned that a virtual session would be ideal, but it should be after the legislative season. Andrew Harmon mentioned

that it would likely occur in the Fall or late summer months. Everyone agrees with it being in the Fall. That will also give the committee time to set the whole event up.

**c. Goal 5 Objectives Update**

Regarding the goal 5 objectives, Andrew Harmon noted that he had a brief but good conversation with Brendan Goodwin at NH Housing. He noted that Brendan Goodwin wasn't completely aware of what we do so he gave him a quick rundown of our work. Brendan Goodwin seemed interested in the council and seemed open to giving a presentation at a future full SILC meeting. He invited someone to present at next month's Advocacy Committee meeting.

**State Legislative Update**

Andrew Harmon asked if there are any major legislative updates. Ryan Donnelly mentioned that he had some bad news regarding HB 1032. This bill would have provided an exemption under the right to know law's quorum and physical attendance requirements for individuals with a disability and caregivers of individuals with a disability. It was taken up by the House Judiciary a couple of weeks ago and they recommended the bill inexpedient to legislate. Basically, they are not recommending the bill be passed. Discussion ensued on the ridiculousness of the reasons that some representatives gave for their inexpedient to legislate votes. The two reasons were how people would fake a disability or fake being a caregiver to be exempt from RSA 91-A and how the bill wasn't needed because members of the disability community were able to testify in-person in support of this bill. He lastly noted that the bill can be reintroduced next year.

There is another public hearing on a bill that is trying to ensure that Section 504 would be codified into NH state law should something happen at the federal level to weaken or remove Section 504 protections. Andrew Harmon noted that he saw that there were around 240 in support and only 5 opposed to the bill.

Ryan Witterschein mentioned a change with the federal VA. They put into place that if you are basically feeling better or more recovered from your disability, they would lower the compensation rate for it. Even though the VA passed it they said they aren't going to enforce it but they might if you petition for an increase in your disability rating.

**Highlighting Upcoming Local Elections regarding Accessible Voting**

Andrew Harmon shared that most local elections will take place within the next couple of weeks in March and asked everyone to help spread the word about the new accessible voting device, OmniBallot, which will be rolled out for these elections. The device, created by the same company behind the One4All system, replaces the former keyboard with a handheld controller-style device that comes in either a three-button version or a multi-button version. Andrew Harmon noted he has not yet seen which version the state selected but had the opportunity to try

one last year at Future in Sight. He asked that anyone who hears of issues with the device in their town, report them to him so the information can be shared with voting-rights coalitions. In response to Ryan Donnelly's question about press releases or instructional materials, Andrew Harmon explained that materials are available on Future in Sight's website, though somewhat hidden, and that the organization plans to hold several training sessions—mostly in person with some virtual options. He will send out a direct link to the materials. Andrew Harmon also requested that people report any instances of voters being turned away due to documentation issues for either absentee ballots or in-person voting.

Andrew Harmon mentioned that there has been a trial going on in the last couple weeks. This case is the Coalition for Open Democracy et al. vs David Scanlan et al. where they are suing on HB 1569 which was the original bill that put in all the citizen proofs for voting in-person. He doesn't know when the ruling will be out, but he believes that they've wrapped up the trial phase. He hears that they hope to have it wrapped up in the summer months. If he hears anything specific, he'll be sure to share that with everyone.

He doesn't know of any specific active legislation that makes changes to documentation requirements other than last year's retained SB 323 which is going to be in executive in March. He will forward that information and encourages anybody interested is saying anything about the bill to contact their representative.

### **Other Business**

Andrew Harmon mentioned that at the last Governance Committee meeting, Amy Clark asked him to ask the committee to send her any stories from people with disabilities, especially anything around transitioning from high school to either work or college.

Herb Carpenter mentioned the new Rural Health Transformation Program and how it will transform community mental health centers into Community Centered Behavioral Health Centers. He wonders if some of that funding could be used to address the service gaps we have been talking about. Ryan Donnelly mentioned that he has been following this program a bit as well and from his understanding is that the money cannot be used to fill in service gaps, it's more about investing in new health infrastructure. Andrew Harmon mentioned that he has been having a hard time finding information on it except that it's a grant through Go North. The one thing he did know is that the state had to submit for one big grant for the state and then they were going to parcel that out to the different regions. Ryan Donnelly mentioned that NH was awarded 204 million dollars for the first round with the potential to receive roughly that same amount of money over the next 5 to 7 years depending on how well we utilize those funds and meet the milestones that the feds have set. Joshua Gehling will send a link to more information on the program to the committee.

Ryan Witterschein mentioned that Andrew Harmon is going to be leading an ad hoc committee on some of our SPIL objectives. He volunteered Herb Carpenter to the ad hoc. It's going to be another meeting each month, and it will be on the housing objectives. He formulated an attack plan that he is going to share with Andrew Harmon. The ad hoc will consist of Herb Carpenter, Rob Kallin, Ryan Witterschein, and Matthew Greenwood. He noted at the next Full SILC meeting, he is going to formally introduce the ad hoc. Andrew Harmon and Ryan Witterschein will work offline to set up a time to meet to discuss the specifics of the ad hoc committee.

### **Adjournment**

Andrew Harmon mentioned that he would entertain a motion to adjourn.

**\*Herb Carpenter moved.**

**Second:** Andrew Harmon

**Discussion:** None

**All in Favor:** Yes      **Abstaining:** None

**Motion Carried**

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Meeting adjourned at 3:30pm.

Minutes Recorded by Jennifer Beaulieu.