# MAPBC Meeting Minutes – April 10, 2025

## Massachusetts Association of Parents of Blind Children (MAPBC)

Date: Thursday, April 10, 2025

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Virtual Meeting

Minutes submitted by Hai Nguyen Ly (Vice President)

1. Members in attendance included:

* Hai Nguyen Ly
* Youme Nguyen Ly
* Stephanie Barrera Valdes
* Ellen Bartelt
* Kobena Bonney
* John Wetzel (A sighted parent with a blind child)

2. Call to Order and NFB Pledge

Stephanie called the meeting to order at 6:05 PM and led attendees in the NFB pledge.

3. The March meeting minutes were mentioned and unanimously approved.

4. Welcome and Introduction of New attendee

We all wen around and introduced ourselves and welcomed John, the parent of an 8-year-old child who is blind. Youme offered ongoing support and encouraged connections outside monthly meetings.

## Discussion Items:

4. Secretary/Treasurer Role and Election

The division discussed the need to fill the Secretary/Treasurer position. Ellen expressed interest in serving. Stephanie will circulate a call for additional interested candidates via the NFBMA Listserv. Elections for the position or positions will take place at the May 8 meeting.

5. Treasurer's Report and Fundraising

Stephanie reported that $421.50 was raised for the BELL Academy during The recent popcorn fundraiser. The store sold a total of $543 from which $271.50 will be donated to the NFB BELL Academy of Massachusetts. In addition, we received a total of. $150 in direct donations to the NFB BELL Academy of Massachusetts. Stephanie will contact Liz for the latest treasury balance for mAPBC. Everyone agreed on the importance of creating a standardized process for keeping track of division funds. A follow-up meeting will be scheduled with the new treasurer to go over procedures after elections.

6. Mentorship Program Initiative

Stephanie proposed a mentorship program pairing blind adults with blind youth, similar to Big Brothers, Big Sisters. Hai raised concerns around logistics and background checks, recommending that a process be documented for the affiliate and perspective parents who might be interested in such a program. Stephanie and Ellen mentioned leveraging NFB’s background check program being used for BELL to help wit this. Kobena suggested a structured orientation for mentors and parents that could be attended virtually. Ellen shared insights from Illinois where in-person mentoring was more effective as part of their Freedom Link program. Hai and Stephanie agreed to draft a program outline to flesh out the idea in more detail. Hai will explore documentation from the NFB of Illinois and contact Debbie Stein about the Freedom Link program.

7. Disabled Parents Rights Bill

The Bill to Protect Disabled Parents' Rights is being reintroduced at the state level. Stephanie will reach out to [Kathryn Gatuslao](mailto:kgatuslao@mhlac.org) to confirm whether anything has changed in the bill to determine whether we can recommend affiliate support. She will also share any new information with the board and involve Kira, the affiliate legislative lead, for next steps.

9. Bell Academy Updates

The 2025 Bell Academy will be held in Waltham at a center with indoor and outdoor facilities. Precious will serve as the lead instructor. This year, a $75 program fee will be introduced as recommended by NFB national due to budget constraints. Students who complete the full program will receive a free cane, slate, and other materials. We all discussed the feasibility of expanding the BELL program into New Hampshire, Maine, and Connecticut. Stephanie will contact local NFB leaders in those states to gauge interest in partnering.

10. Additional Fundraising Opportunities

John recommended connecting with local disability commissions, Lions Clubs, and municipal grants for additional fundraising. The group agreed to explore grant funding and emphasized the importance of leveraging personal connections. Stephanie will initiate an email thread with John and Hai to brainstorm ideas.

Next Steps and Action items:

* Review NFB of Illinois documentation (Freedom Link): Hai
* Contact Debbie Stein for program details: Hai
* Draft outline for mentorship initiative: Hai and Stephanie
* Confirm status with [Kathryn Gatuslao](mailto:kgatuslao@mhlac.org)

on Bill to Protect Disabled Parents' Rights: Stephanie

* Share bill updates with Board: Stephanie
* Loop in Kira (legislative lead): Stephanie
* Email affiliate Listserv to recruit Secretary/Treasurer candidates for mAPBC: Stephanie
* Retrieve current treasury balance from Liz: Stephanie
* Schedule session with new Treasurer to explain donation tracking: Hai or Stephanie
* Coordinate fundraising email thread: Stephanie
* Contact NFB leaders in neighboring states (Bell expansion): Stephanie

11. Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:15 PM.

Next Meeting: Thursday, May 8, 2025 at 6:00 PM