

Mayor's Commission on Persons with Disabilities

Commissioner Bios

Stephen Beard, MCPD Chair, has been involved in the disability community in Oakland and the East Bay for many years. He is a successful Realtor for people with disabilities and their families, and has been an advocate for all issues related to disability rights. Since 2005, he has been a member of the Alameda County Developmental Disabilities Planning and Advisory Council (DD Council), and until 2012, he served on the Board of the renowned World Institute on Disability. His goal as Chairperson is to ensure the MCPD has a positive influence on the lives of Oakland residents with disabilities. Mr. Beard joined the Commission in 2010. He is also member of the MCPD's Access Compliance Advisory Committee (ACAC).

Denise Sherer Jacobson, Vice Chair, joined the MCPD in 2010. As an educator and advocate in the East Bay Area's disability community for over thirty years, Ms. Sherer Jacobson is a champion of inclusion, committed to enriching society by weaving the disability experience into the tapestry of living. She is Chair of the MCPD's Ad Hoc Strategic Planning and Oversight Committee (SPOC). An accomplished writer, she has authored the memoir THE QUESTION OF DAVID: A Disabled Mother's Journey Through Adoption, Family, and Life, as well as articles that have appeared in publications such as *The San Francisco Chronicle* and *New Mobility*. Until recently, she's also had a long-term affiliation as Board Member and Development Chair of East Bay Innovations, Inc., a non-profit which provides supported living and employment services to adults with developmental disabilities.

Scott Blanks joined the MCPD in 2012. Living in the Bay Area for more than 14 years, he has a passion for helping people with disabilities connect with society through the use of assistive technology. Working as an assistive technology specialist, and now as the Director of Rehabilitation Services at the Lions Center for the Blind, Mr. Blanks advocates for accessible public transit, and serves as vice chair on the AC Transit Accessibility Advisory Committee. He is Co-Chair of MCPD's ACAC. Through his work with the MCPD, Mr. Blanks hopes to strengthen the voice of persons with disabilities at the city level and beyond.

Amy Burns joined the MCPD in 2011. An educator of Exceptional Needs students since 1998 for Oakland Unified School District, Ms. Burns earned her BA from UC Berkeley and is credentialed in Exceptional Needs and Administration. She has served as PTSA president for two years and is presently an Oakland Education Association Representative. She serves the MCPD's Ad Hoc Outreach and Education Committee. Ms. Burns is committed to removing the stigma surrounding disabilities and to doing her part to revitalize the great city of Oakland, CA.

Michelle Hernandez, PhD, joined the MCPD in 2010. She received her PhD in Clinical Psychology from Alliant International University in 2011 and currently sees patients at the Psychological Services Center in Oakland, as well as satellite offices in Berkeley and the

Fruitvale District. Her areas of specialty include physical disability, PTSD, sexual abuse, and domestic violence. She trains doctoral level students regarding the various aspects of disability, is passionate about disability advocacy, and is an inspirational public speaker. Dr. Hernandez serves on the Ad Hoc Outreach and Education Committee.

Marlene Christine Hurd joined the MCPD in 2010. She's been active in the disability community for over twelve years. Ms. Hurd's interest is working towards improving the quality of life for people with disabilities. She's a member of the MCPD's ACAC. Ms. Hurd also serves as a Commissioner with the Oakland Housing Authority representing 15,000 families. She is a Board of Director for Healthy Communities, Inc., and a Commissioner on Alameda County Consumer Affairs. Formerly, she served as Co-President for the Mills College Disability Alliance and as a member of the Disabled Students Programs and Services committee in the California Community College system.

Lorraine Rosenblatt resumed her role on the MCPD in September 2011, after serving on the Commission 2004-2010. A staunch advocate of emergency preparedness for persons with access and functional needs (PAFN), Ms. Rosenblatt began her crusade with the Oakland Red Cross in 2005 in the wake of Hurricane Katrina and became an advisory task member of Communities of Oakland Responding to Emergencies (CORE) in 2010. She chairs MCPD's Ad Hoc Outreach and Education Committee to ensure that people with disabilities have an integral presence within the greater community of Oakland.

Richard Rueda joined the MCPD in 2013. He has worked statewide in the field of Blindness and Low Vision since 1992, serving the Intercommunity Blind Center in Whittier, the Junior Blind of America in Los Angeles, Department of Rehabilitation of California, and Community Services at the LightHouse for the Blind and Visually Impaired in San Francisco. In 2011, he returned to the Junior Blind organization to serve as their new Director of Transition Services for northern and central California. Mr. Rueda has facilitated professional workshops and seminars for CTEBVI (California Transcribers and Educators for the Blind and Visually Impaired) since 2004, and also presents on employment solutions for blind and disabled persons at national and International conferences. In late 2010, he presented at a conference in Taipei City, Taiwan on Barriers to Employment. His focus on the MCPD to better learn, assist, and engage in proactive civic leadership on behalf of citizens and consumers with disabilities of Oakland.

Fatimah Simmons joined the MCPD in 2013. Ms. Simmons wryly claims that if fashion and politics had a lovechild, she'd be it. She left the glamorous world of bridal fashion in New York City to pursue a Master's in Public Policy from UC Berkeley's Goldman School. Volunteering on a congressional campaign in Brooklyn sparked her initial interest in politics. A 2008 trip to the DNC (Democratic National Convention) cemented her decision to shift careers. Now as the Director of Programs for IGNITE California, she helps deliver political and civic engagement education to young women in high school and college. As the daughter of a mother who is a wheelchair-user, Ms. Simmons strives to advocate for the interests of people with disabilities and

their families while on the MCPD by fully engaging with the elected leadership of Oakland. She serves as a member of MCPD's Ad Hoc SPOC.

Phyllis Stevenson joined the MCPD in 2012. As life-long resident of Oakland and a parent of a child with learning disabilities, Ms. Stevenson offers the perspective of seeing the community through a unique lens which enables her to realize how important it is to live in an environment where city services are accessible. MCPD provides the opportunity to advocate for an accessible community from her daughter's vantage point. While her passion is to focus on issues of concern to the learning disabled population, she's an enthusiastic member of MCPD's Ad Hoc SPOC working to promote greater influence on decisions that affect the larger disability community. Ms. Stevenson received her B.A. from Mills College and operates a financial services business with her husband. She also volunteers as a teaching leader for the worldwide non-profit Bible Study Fellowship, Inc.

Miquette A. Thompson joined the MCPD in 2013. Mrs. Thompson has worked within the Bay Area non-profit community for over eight years, primarily providing direct care services to high needs youth and families. In recent years, she has worked as a nonprofit fundraiser and volunteer coordinator for organizations providing critical services to high needs individuals. Mrs. Thompson holds degrees in English & Liberal Studies from Notre Dame de Namur University, and will complete the Master of Nonprofit Administration program at University of San Francisco in December 2013. Mrs. Thompson views her role on the MPCD as an opportunity to help support the efforts of the City Oakland and its citizens in creating a more inclusive community, particularly in the area of employment.

Grace Wright joined the MCPD in 2012. She has been active in the disability community for more than 10 years. Concerned about the impact that discrimination, negative public perceptions and stereotyping have on public policy and the ability of persons with disabilities to lead purposeful self-directive lives, her goal is to work for civil rights and inclusion for persons with disabilities. Ms. Wright has been an advocate and an end-of-life care provider for seniors with disabilities. She is the Wellness Coordinator for Berkeley's Center for Independent Living (CIL) where she promotes healthy lifestyles for seniors with disabilities so that they may live independently and thrive in the community. She sits on the MCPD's ACAC.