

# Racial Equity in Public Health Commission

Co-Chairs: Melissa McCaw, OPM Secretary & Tekisha Dwan Everette, PhD, Executive Director Health Equity Solutions

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## Regular Commission Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, January 26<sup>th</sup>, 2022

2:30 PM-3:30 PM

Via Teams

**Members Present:** Co-Chair Melissa McCaw, Co-Chair Tekisha Dwan Everette, Astread Ferron-Poole, Carline Charmelus, Diana Reyes, Craig Burns, Heather Aaron, Hilda Santiago, Jonathan Steinberg, Katie Dykes, Kean Zimmerman, Kenyatta Muzzani, Kyle Abercrombie, Leonard Jahad, Marina Marmolejo, Steven Hernández, Tiffany Donelson, Vannessa Dorantes, Victoria Veltri

**Guest Presenters:** Caroline Beitman from the Office of Legislative Management

**Members Absent:** Chavon Hamilton, John Frassinelli, Mary Daughtery Abrams, Ryan Calhoun, Tammy Hendricks, Travis Simms

### Opening Remarks from the Co-Chairs

McCaw called the meeting to order at 2:36 PM and welcomed commission members and the public. She noted that today was Attorney Kean Zimmerman's first commission meeting. He was appointed by Governor Lamont in December and represents the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee of the Connecticut Bar Association. McCaw also welcomed DEEP Commissioner Katie Dykes who joined the meeting in place of former DEEP designee, Natalie Braswell. Braswell represented DEEP on the Commission prior to her appointment as State Comptroller.

McCaw asked for a motion to amend the agenda and remove the item labeled "Executive Session" as it was no longer necessary for the meeting. Charmelus made the motion, and it was seconded by Reyes. The motion passed on a voice vote with no opposition.

### Overview of the Commission's Executive Director Hiring and Recruitment Process

Chair Everette introduced Caroline Beitman, Human Resources Administrator for the Office of Legislative Management, who was present to provide an update on the hiring and recruitment process for an Executive Director.

Beitman stated that OLM began the search for an Executive Director in the Fall of 2021 and posted the position on September 2, 2021. OLM interviewed 13 individuals and notified McCaw and Everette in early November that they had selected three finalists. One candidate removed themselves from consideration before the final set of interviews. The Co-Chairs then interviewed both individuals and chose a final candidate to be confirmed by the full Commission at today's meeting. Unfortunately, the candidate told OLM on January 25<sup>th</sup> that they had taken another employment opportunity.

Beitman said OLM would restart the recruitment process and hoped it would not be as lengthy as the first attempt. She hoped to come back to the Commission in a couple months with a new finalist for their consideration.

Beitman asked members for website suggestions for posting the position. The following organizations were suggested as resources that could assist as they often share job postings focused on recruiting public health professionals:

- The National Academy for State Health Policy (NASHP)
- National Association of County and City Health Officials (NACCHO)
- Families USA

Members did not have questions for Beitman about the process.

### **Presentation by Health Equity Solutions on “Words & Vocabulary on Equity”**

Everette presented to the Commission on “Words & Vocabulary on Equity.” The full slide deck used for the presentation is attached to these minutes. The purpose of the presentation was for members to gain an understanding of key terms to facilitate the commission’s dialogue in meetings, subcommittee meetings, community outreach, and commission publications. Presentation highlights include:

- A brief discussion on the evolution of language and how everyone comes to this work with different definitions of health equity. Everette noted that to be effective as a Commission, it is important to establish a common understanding of key terms and be intentional in our use of language.
- An overview of Health Equity Solution’s vision and mission
  - **Vision:** For every Connecticut resident to attain optimal health regardless of race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.
  - **Mission:** To promote policies, programs, and practices that result in equitable health care access, delivery, and outcomes for all people in Connecticut.
- Key terms that were defined during the presentation included:
  - Race
  - Ethnicity
  - Racism and its different forms:
    - Structural Racism
    - Institutional Racism
    - Interpersonal Racism
    - Internalized Racism
  - Anti-Racism
  - Anti-Racist
  - Racial Equity
  - Equality vs. Equity
  - Health Equity
  - Health Disparities
  - Disproportionate Impact
  - Minorities vs. Minoritized
  - Social Determinants of Health
- Resources shared included the Health Equity Language Guide for State Officials:  
<https://www.shvs.org/resource/health-equity-language-guide-for-state-officials/>

**Good of the Order**

There were no comments from members.

**Public Comment**

There were no comments from the public.

**Next Steps**

McCaw reiterated that despite not having hired an Executive Director, there were still tasks that members could complete to lay a foundation for the strategic planning process. She also suggested that the Commission continue with meetings every other month and subcommittees meet on a regular basis following today’s kick-off.

Before adjourning the meeting and breaking into their subcommittee sessions, McCaw reminded members of the focus areas for the commission as outlined in PA 21-35:

1. Structural racism in the state's laws and regulations impacting public health, where "structural racism" means a system that structures opportunity and assigns value in a way that disproportionately and negatively impacts Black, Indigenous, Latino or Asian people or other people of color.
2. Racial disparities in the state's criminal justice system and its impact on the health and well-being of individuals and families, including overall health outcomes and rates of depression, suicide, substance use disorder and chronic disease.
3. Racial disparities in access to the resources necessary for healthy living, including, but not limited to, access to adequate fresh food and physical activity, public safety, and the decrease of pollution in communities.
4. Racial disparities in health outcomes.
5. The impact of zoning restrictions on the creation of housing disparities and such disparities' impact on public health.
6. Racial disparities in state hiring and contracting processes.
7. Any suggestions to reduce the impact of the public health crisis of racism within the vulnerable populations studied pursuant to the Act.

Subcommittee rosters and staff-persons were also shared again.

<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Structural Racism in Laws, Regulation, State Business &amp; Hiring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Hilda Santiago</li> <li>▪ Heather Aaron</li> <li>▪ Astread Ferron-Poole</li> <li>▪ Steven Hernández</li> <li>▪ Demian Fontanella</li> </ul> <p><i>Staffed by OPM</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Criminal Justice</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Leonard Jahad</li> <li>▪ Kean Zimmerman</li> <li>▪ Vannessa Dorantes</li> <li>▪ Diana Reyes</li> <li>▪ Craig Burns</li> <li>▪ Marc Pelka</li> <li>▪ Kenyatta Muzzani</li> </ul> <p><i>Staffed by Health Equity Solutions</i></p>
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<b>Public Health, Health Outcomes and Healthy Living</b>	<b>Zoning</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Tiffany Donelson</li><li>▪ Chavon Hamilton</li><li>▪ Ryan Calhoun</li><li>▪ Mary Daugherty Abrams</li><li>▪ Jonathan Steinberg</li><li>▪ John Frassinelli</li><li>▪ Tammy Hendricks</li><li>▪ Heather Aaron</li><li>▪ Claudio Gualtieri</li></ul> <p><i>Staffed by Health Equity Solutions</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>▪ Carline Charmelus</li><li>▪ Travis Simms</li><li>▪ Kyle Abercrombie</li><li>▪ Marina Marmolejo</li><li>▪ Martin Heft</li></ul> <p><i>Staffed by OPM</i></p>

### **Adjournment**

McCaw adjourned the meeting at 3:23 PM.