

# Racial Equity in Public Health Commission

Co-Chairs: Claudio Gualtieri, OPM Designee & Tekisha Dwan Everette, PhD, Executive Director Health Equity Solutions

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## Regular Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, March 28<sup>th</sup>, 2022

10:00 AM-11:30 AM

Via Teams

**Members Present:** Co-Chair Claudio Gualtieri, Co-Chair Tekisha Everette, Astread Ferron-Poole, Craig Burns, Heather Aaron, Katie Dykes, Kean Zimmerman, Kenyatta Muzzani, Kyle Abercrombie, Marina Marmolejo, Melissa Santos, Steven Hernández, Tammy Hendricks, Tiffany Donelson, Vanessa Dorantes, Victoria Veltri, Hilda Santiago, Chavon Hamilton, Chlo-Anne Bobrowski for John Frassinelli,

**Guest Presenters:** Caroline Beitman from the Office of Legislative Management, Mark Abraham - Executive Director for DataHaven, Sumit Sajjani – OHS Health Information Technology Officer, and Karen Wang, MD, Yale ERIC.

**Members Absent:** Carline Charmelus, Mary Daughtery Abrams, Jonathan Steinberg, Travis Simms, Leonard Jahad, Diana Reyes

### Opening Remarks from the Co-Chairs

Dr. Everette welcomed members and announced that Claudio Gualtieri, OPM Senior Policy Advisor to the Secretary, was named as the new co-chair for the Commission by Acting OPM Secretary Jeff Beckham. Dr. Melissa Santos was also recognized for attending her first meeting. She was appointed by Senator Duff to replace Ryan Calhoun as a representative of CT Children's.

### Meeting Minutes Approval

Dorantes moved approval of the meeting minutes and Veltri seconded the motion. Burns noted that his title on the PowerPoint presentation was incorrect, it should be "Chief Mental Health Officer" not "Chief Mental Health Commissioner." He requested that if the title was incorrect in the minutes, the adjustment also be made there. It was determined an adjustment only needed to be made to the PowerPoint. The minutes were approved unanimously.

### Public Comment

Kim Sandor, Executive Director of the CT Nurses Association, shared information about the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Minority Fellowship Program (MFP). Applications are now open for the 2022-2023 program and the deadline to apply is April 30<sup>th</sup>. The program is open to individuals considering earning a master's or doctoral degree in psychiatric mental health nursing and identify as a member of an ethnic minority in the U.S. Taken from the program's website: *"The MFP aims to improve behavioral health care outcomes for racial and ethnic populations by growing the number of racial and ethnic minorities in the nation's behavioral health workforce. The program also seeks to train and better prepare behavioral health practitioners to more effectively treat and serve people of different cultural and ethnic backgrounds."* The full website address to the MFP is <https://www.samhsa.gov/minority-fellowship-program>. Sandor also shared a PowerPoint presentation that is attached to these minutes.

### Update on the Executive Director Hiring and Recruitment Process

Caroline Beitman shared that OLM received 34 resumes to consider after the job was posted. That pool was narrowed to 6 candidates and then to 4. She said that legislative leaders will consider which four candidates to advance for a final round of interviews with Commission co-chairs during the first week of April. Once the co-chairs have selected a final

candidate, the Commission would confirm the candidate by a majority vote during the next full Commission meeting on May 23<sup>rd</sup>.

## Guest Speakers

The Commission had three guest speakers. Mark Abraham's presentation focused on DataHaven's approaches to community data needs, results from their 2021 Family Economic Security Survey, efforts to create Town Equity Reports and Regional Equity Profiles. Sumit Sajjani gave an update on OHS's efforts on the CT Race, Ethnicity and Language (REL) initiative per Section 11 of the PA 21-35. The presentation included an overview of OHS' responsibilities prescribed under PA 21-35 and their REL journey to date. Dr. Karen Wang gave a history of past, present, and future work on race and ethnicity data collection and analytics for health equity and provided an overview of the 7 stages of the *Roadmap for Race, Ethnicity, and Language Data Collection and Use in Connecticut*. The full presentations are included with these minutes.

DPH Deputy Commissioner Aaron also gave an update on HB 5045 An Act Reducing Lead Poisoning. The bill was proposed by Governor Lamont and would strengthen early intervention in instances of lead poisoning by gradually reducing the blood lead level that triggers parental notifications and home inspections to align with CDC and AAP recommendations more closely.<sup>1</sup> At the time of the meeting, the bill had been voted favorably out of the Public Health Committee and was awaiting a vote of the House and then Senate.

## Adjournment

The co-chairs adjourned the meeting at 11:30 AM because only 90 minutes had been allotted for the meeting. Many commission members also had to attend legislative events occurring simultaneously and later that day. The following agenda items were not addressed during the meeting due to this timing: Discussion on Equity Focused Legislation being considered during the 2022 Session, Subcommittee Updates, and Good of the Order. Subcommittee chairs were asked to submit reports to be included in the minutes.

## Criminal Justice Subcommittee Report

- **Overview:** Currently, the Criminal Justice Subcommittee is collecting and reviewing percentages of disparity in the state based on race in criminal justice indicators, including rates of system involvement. The subcommittee's current goals are efficiently and effectively combining this information into a resource that can be expanded as further expertise and analysis are explored.
- **Current Subcommittee Priorities:**
  - **Collecting existing reports and analyses regarding racial disparity in the juvenile and adult criminal justice system.** Health Equity Solutions staff are collecting available online reports and presenting them to the subcommittee for review for inclusion in the resource the subcommittee is developing. This will create an initial foundation of subcommittee understanding that will be informed and reinforced through discussions with agencies and organizations managing the data or issuing reports.
  - **Contacting agencies and organizations that manage racial disparity data, or report racial disparity data analysis, to seek more detailed information and to invite them to attend future subcommittee meetings.** The subcommittee is identifying agencies that maintain data, or have issued reports, regarding racial disparity in the juvenile justice and criminal justice systems both involving people housed in facilities and under supervision. The subcommittee will seek guidance from the agencies and organizations managing this information regarding how best to interpret and include it in the resource the

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from HB 5045 Fact Sheet that can be accessed here: [AA-Reducing-Lead-Poisoning.pdf \(ct.gov\)](#)

subcommittee is developing. The subcommittee is developing a method to contact these agencies or organizations.

- **Seeking community input on the impact of criminal justice system disparities.** The subcommittee is identifying impacted organizations and individuals who may be willing to share input regarding the effect of disparities in the adult criminal and juvenile justice systems. Like item (b) above, the subcommittee is developing a list of organizations and people to contact as well as a method to invite them to participate in the subcommittee. This priority will seek primarily qualitative input to complement the quantitative data under the second bullet point.

### Public Health Subcommittee Report

- **Overview:** Currently, the Public Health Subcommittee is conducting a landscape analysis of the various indicators related to public health to then use as benchmarks to measure progress. The subcommittee is also in the process of identifying state agencies and organizations to speak at future meetings.
- **Current Subcommittee Priorities:**
  - **Identifying indicators to create benchmarks to measure progress.** Health Equity Solutions staff are identifying and collecting reports and data that are available online on topics such as disparities in access to health insurance, education, maternal and child health, behavioral health, social determinants of health, and chronic disease rates. Health Equity Solutions will then organize these indicators into the categories of education, physical health, and environmental health. Afterwards, the subcommittee will proceed with narrowing down the indicators within those categories that we wish to explore further and that we wish to develop benchmarks for.
  - **Identifying agencies and organizations to present their organization's data at future meetings.** For future meetings, we are considering inviting guest speakers from various state agencies to elaborate on the indicators that are chosen so that we may gain a deeper understanding of what may be possible when deciding on how to create benchmarks for them.

### Zoning Subcommittee Report

The Zoning Subcommittee of the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health has met four times. To start, we began by familiarizing ourselves with the enabling legislation, and working toward defining our charge. Then we began to build out our knowledge of the subject matter by doing preliminary research on zoning, housing, public health, and data collection. We are now currently working to engage with stakeholders to learn more about work currently being done to combat racial disparities in these research areas.

Additionally, the Partnership for Strong Communities is working with Trinity College's Master of Arts in Public Policy program and participants in the Public Policy Practicum class. These students are currently:

- Examining the impact of zoning restrictions on the creation of housing disparities and how such disparities impact public health.
- Conducting a literature review of existing research on the impacts of zoning on public health disparities & data from the state health department.
- Comparing demographically similar municipalities in Connecticut that have been zoned differently and have thus resulted in differing public health outcomes.

These students have offered to share their findings with our subcommittee, including a written report and PowerPoint presentation to the Partnership and the Commission.