



COMMISSION ON RACIAL EQUITY IN PUBLIC HEALTH

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

BYLAWS OF THE COMMISSION ON RACIAL EQUITY IN PUBLIC HEALTH

I. ARTICLE I. STATUTORY GOVERNING STRUCTURE

- A. There is established a Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health which shall be part of the Legislative Department. The Commission shall document and make recommendations to decrease the effect of racism on public health, in accordance with the provisions of sections 2 to 4 of **Public Act No. 21-35, effective July 1, 2021**.
- B. Pursuant to changes in accordance with **§ 188 of Public Act No. 23-204**, the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health shall consist of an advisory body with the following members:
1. Three appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives, one of whom shall be a representative of a nonprofit organization that focuses on health policy and racial equity issues and shall serve as Co-Chairperson of the Advisory Body, one of whom shall be a representative of a nonprofit organization that focuses on racial equity and community engagement, and one of whom shall be an expert in immigration policy and law;
 2. Three appointed by the president pro tempore of the Senate, one of whom shall be a health disparities expert affiliated with an academic research institution and shall serve as Co-Chairperson of the Advisory Body, one of whom shall be a representative of a violence intervention program using a health-based approach to examine individuals post-incarceration and policies for integration, and one of whom shall be a representative of a philanthropic entity that focuses on racial equity;

*Passed by the Advisory Body February 1, 2024



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3. Two appointed by the majority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom shall be a representative of a nonpartisan criminal justice policy and research entity, and one of whom shall be a biostatistician or epidemiologist with knowledge of the effects of social-structural factors on health;
 4. Two appointed by the majority leader of the Senate, one of whom shall be a representative of a nonprofit that focuses on equitable housing policy, and one of whom shall be a medical professional with expertise in diversity, equity and inclusion policy;
 5. Two appointed by the minority leader of the House of Representatives, one of whom shall be an expert in environmental impacts on human health who is affiliated with an academic institution, and one of whom shall be a representative of a nonprofit that focuses on economic research and policy;
 6. Two appointed by the minority leader of the Senate, one of whom shall be a public health educator or researcher affiliated with an academic institution, and one of whom shall be a current or former educator, school counselor, or school nurse with public policy experience; and
 7. One appointed by the chairperson of the Black and Puerto Rican Caucus who shall be an education policy researcher affiliated with an academic research institution.
- C. Any member of the Advisory Body appointed may be a member of the General Assembly.
- D. Appointed members shall serve a term that is coterminous with the appointing official and may serve more than one term.
- E. The Co-Chairpersons may designate individuals with the required qualifications stated for the applicable appointment to serve on the Commission until



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appointments are made pursuant to section B of this article.

- F. Members shall continue to serve until their successors are appointed. Any vacancy shall be filled by the appointing authority. Any vacancy occurring other than by expiration of term shall be filled for the balance of the unexpired term.
- G. A majority of the membership shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business and any decision shall be by a majority vote of those present at a meeting, except the commission may establish such committees, subcommittees or other entities as it deems necessary to further the purposes of the commission. The commission may adopt rules of procedure.
- H. The members of the advisory body shall serve without compensation, but shall, upon request and within the limits of available funds, be reimbursed for expenses necessarily incurred in the performance of their duties.
- I. There shall be an Executive Director of the commission. The Executive Director and staff shall be employed by the Joint Committee on Legislative Management, which shall have authority over the hiring, termination, and performance review of the Executive Director and staff.

II. ARTICLE II. DUTIES AND POWERS

A. The Commission shall have the following powers and duties:

1. Support collaboration by bringing together partners from many different sectors to recognize the links between health and other issues and policy areas and build new partnerships to promote health and equity and increase government efficiency;
2. Create a comprehensive strategic plan to eliminate health disparities and inequities across sectors;
3. Study the impact that the public health crisis of racism has on vulnerable populations within diverse groups of the state population, including on the basis of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and



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disability, including, but not limited to, Black American descendants of slavery;

4. Obtain from any legislative or executive department, board, commission or other agency of the state or any organization or other entity such assistance as necessary and available to carry out the purposes of this section;
5. Accept any gift, donation or bequest for the purpose of performing the duties described in this section;
6. Perform such other acts as may be necessary and appropriate to carry out the duties described in this section, including, but not limited to, the creation of subcommittees.

B. The Commission shall engage with a diverse range of community members, including people of color who identify as members of diverse groups of the state population, including on the basis of race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity and disability, who experience inequities in health, to make recommendations to the relevant state agencies or other entities on an ongoing basis concerning the following:

1. Structural racism in the state's laws and regulations impacting public health. "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;



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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; and
 7. Any suggestions to reduce the impact of the public health crisis of racism within the vulnerable populations.
- C.** Every six months, the Commission shall submit a report to the Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management and the joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health and appropriations and the budgets of state agencies, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, concerning:
1. The activities of the Commission during the prior six-month period;
 2. Any progress made in attaining the goal described in section D of the bylaws;
 3. Any recommended changes to such goal based on the research conducted by the Commission, any disparity study performed by any state agency or entity, or any community input received;
 4. The status of the comprehensive strategic plan required under section D of the bylaws; and
 5. Any recommendations for policy changes or amendments to state law.
- D.** The Commission shall develop and periodically update a comprehensive strategic plan to eliminate health disparities and inequities across sectors.
1. The strategic plan shall include consideration of the following: Air and water quality, natural resources and agricultural land, affordable housing, infrastructure systems, public health, access to quality health care, social services, sustainable communities, and the impact of climate change.



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2. Such plan shall address the incorporation of health and equity into specific policies, programs and government decision-making processes including, but not limited to, the following:
 - (a) Disparities in laws and regulations impacting public health;
 - (b) Disparities in the criminal justice system;
 - (c) Disparities in access to resources, including, but not limited to, healthy food, safe housing, public safety, and environments free of excess pollution; and
 - (d) Disparities in access to quality health care.

3. As part of such plan, the commission shall determine, using available scientifically based measurements, the rates of disparity in the state based on race and ethnicity, in the following areas:
 - (a) Education indicators, including kindergarten entry inventory, third grade reading proficiency, scores on the mastery examination, administered pursuant to section 10-14n of the general statutes, rates of school-based discipline, high school graduation rates and retention rates after the first year of study for institutions of higher education in the state, as defined in section 3-22a of the general statutes;
 - (b) Health care utilization and outcome indicators, including health insurance coverage rates, pregnancy and infant health outcomes, emergency room visits and deaths related to conditions associated with exposure to environmental pollutants, including respiratory ailments, quality of life, life expectancy, lead poisoning, access to adequate healthy nutrition, and self-reported well-being surveys;
 - (c) Criminal justice indicators, including rates of involvement with the justice system; and



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- (d) economic indicators, including rates of poverty, income, and housing insecurity.
4. It shall be the goal of the state to attain at least a seventy per cent reduction in the racial inequities set forth in subdivisions (a) to (d).
5. Upon completion of the initial comprehensive strategic plan, and thereafter of any update to such plan, the Commission shall submit the plan to the joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to public health, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general statutes, and to any other joint standing committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of matters relevant to what is contained in such plan, as determined by the commission.

III. ARTICLE III. BYLAWS FOR ADMINISTRATIVE ORGANIZATION

A. Duties of the Co-Chairs of the advisory body. The Co-Chairs shall:

1. Preside at meetings of the Commission;
2. Be responsible, in collaboration with the Executive Director, for the preparation of the agenda for Commission meetings;
3. Assist with the selection process of Commission advisory body members;
4. Have the power to call special meetings of the Commission;
5. Work in collaboration with the Executive Director on the planning and implementation of Commission action; and
6. Assist the Executive Director interpreting and disseminating decisions of the Commission.

B. Meetings of the Commission:

1. The Commission shall meet as often as deemed necessary by the Co-Chairs. If a regular meeting is rescheduled, notice of the new meeting shall be given to all advisory body members in a timely manner, where possible.
2. Commission meetings may be conducted in person, or in a virtual or



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hybrid setting. The Executive Director shall choose the manner in which a Commission meeting will take place and will give advisory body members adequate notice of the meeting format.

3. Special meetings may be called by both of the Co-Chairs of the advisory body in an emergency which, in the judgment of the Co-Chairs, cannot wait until the next regularly scheduled meeting.

C. Advisory Board Notice of meeting – Agenda:

1. Regular meetings. The Co-Chairs shall, at least seven (7) calendar days before a scheduled meeting, notify each member of the advisory body by regular or electronic mail ("e-mail") of the time and place of the meeting and of the proposed agenda. Commission staff may notify members on behalf of the Co-Chairs.
2. Special meetings. Notice of intent to call a special meeting, and of the meeting's designated agenda, shall be given to each member of the advisory body without undue delay. In addition to a mailed or e-mailed notice, each member shall be personally contacted, if possible, by telephone or otherwise. The agenda for a special meeting shall be limited to the agenda items stated in the notice.

D. Attendance and transparency at Commission meetings:

1. An advisory body member may attend a meeting by electronic device, such as a speakerphone, provided that:
 - (a) The Executive Director and Co-Chairs have made remote participation available for that meeting;
 - (b) The member is able to hear and participate in the meeting;
 - (c) All members present are able to hear and speak to the member;



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- (d) The Co-Chairs announce their participation by electronic device at the meeting; and
 - (e) Such electronic devices are available. Members attending a meeting by electronic device shall be considered present at the meeting.
 - 2. Voting members of the advisory body may not be represented by designees, unless they have already been formally appointed as a designee of an advisory member through the proxy process outlined in subsection H of this article.
 - 3. All meetings of the Commission are open to the public, unless the members of the advisory body, in conformance with the Freedom of Information Act and, by a vote of two-thirds of the voting members of the advisory body then present, decide that a particular matter should be discussed or voted upon, in an executive session.
- E. Submission of information, reports, and proposals for Commission action:**
- 1. Submissions by the Commission, Co-Chairs, Executive Director, or staff shall ordinarily be distributed to advisory body members, in writing, prior to official presentation whenever possible.
 - 2. In the absence of direction by the Commission as to the form of presentation, the Co-Chairs of the Commission, or its Executive Director in his or her executive capacity, shall prescribe the form of the presentation.
- F. The creation of sub-committees, their activities, and operations:**
- 1. The Co-Chairs and Executive Director may create sub-committees focused on subject matter areas, or operations, within the Commission.



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2. Sub-committees will consist of advisory body members, but may also incorporate non-members.
3. The staff of the Commission shall be responsible for the administrative responsibilities of the sub-committees including organization, facilitation, and communications of agendas and minutes for meetings.
4. Sub-committee meetings may be held to discuss the operations of the Commission, to undertake policy analysis, and to allow for knowledge sharing pertaining to activities and focus areas of the Commission, including from outside organizations.

G. Public statements by Advisory Body Members:

1. Individual advisory body members may make personal statements on public matters but may not speak for the Commission unless authorized by the Co-Chairs or the Executive Director.

H. Voting:

1. Voting members of the advisory body shall indicate their votes on business before the Commission by voice or a show of hands unless a majority of voting members present requests a secret ballot.
2. Whenever any member of the advisory body so requests, votes shall be recorded in the minutes by a count of the number of affirmatives, negatives, and abstentions of those present and voting.
3. Absent voting members of the advisory body may submit written statements to be read or provided in writing, at the discretion of the Co-Chairs, at the meeting.
4. Attendance and voting by proxy: Advisory members may designate an individual to attend and vote on their behalf at Commission meetings. The form and process by which an advisory body member may designate their attendance vote to another individual shall be determined by the



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Executive Director.

I. Records of Commission meetings:

1. Official minutes shall be kept of all meetings of the Commission. Such minutes shall record the presence or absence of all members of the advisory body. The minutes shall record all actions taken by the Commission.
2. Draft minutes shall be mailed or e-mailed to all members of the advisory body five (5) calendar days in advance of the next regular Commission meeting.
3. Distribution of Commission information, reports, and proposals:
 - (a) Information, reports, and proposals which come before the Commission for action shall be designated as drafts, working papers, or in a manner otherwise indicating their tentative status.
 - (b) Appropriately designated drafts or working papers shall be made available to all advisory body members.
 - (c) At the discretion of the Executive Director, appropriately designated drafts or working papers may be made available to other groups or agencies concerned with the subject matter of the drafts or working papers.

J. Executive Director:

1. The Executive Director shall be the chief executive and operating officer of the Commission, be responsible for all day-to-day management functions, and manage and direct all activities of the Commission in accordance with policies established by the Committee on Legislative



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Management, or in consultation with Co-Chairs of the advisory body. Within his or her authority, and in the course of his or her duties, the Executive Director shall define the duties of the staff, supervise their performance, establish titles, and delegate those responsibilities of management as shall, in his or her best judgment, be in the best interest of the Commission. Within his or her authority, and in the course of his or her duties, the Executive Director shall be involved in any matters requiring contact with the office of Legislative Management.

2. The Executive Director shall attend all meetings of the advisory body, and all other sub-committees as necessary, serving as an ex-officio member, without a vote.

K. Receipt of private contributions:

1. The Commission may accept any gifts, donations or bequests for any purposes set forth in its enabling legislation.

L. Suspension and amendment of bylaws:

1. The Commission may temporarily suspend the operation of any bylaw not in statute for a particular meeting of the advisory body by a two-thirds vote of the voting members then present.
2. The Commission may remove or amend any bylaw not in statute upon a written proposal postmarked 25 calendar days prior to the following meeting and approved by a 2/3 vote of the voting members present at that meeting, provided there is a quorum.