



COMMISSION ON RACIAL EQUITY IN PUBLIC HEALTH

CONNECTICUT GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Co-Chair: Ayesha Clarke, Executive Director, Health Equity Solutions

Full Commission Meeting

Thursday, September 11, 2025

10:00 AM – 11:30 AM

Hybrid Meeting

Members Present: Co-Chair Ayesha R. Clarke (HES), Dr. Douglas Brugge (UConn Health), Carline Charmelus (PSC), Chavon Hamilton-Burgess (HHI), Dr. Faryal Mirza (UConn Health), Dr. Patricia O'Rourke (CT Appleseed Center), Dr. Anthony Santella (Fairfield University), Dr. Melissa Santos (CCMC), Dr. Robert Cotto (Trinity College), Leonard Jahad (CVIP), Tiffany Donelson (CHF)

Commission Staff Present: Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, Muna Abbas, Gretchen Shugarts

Members Absent: Barbara López (Make the Road), Dr. Anuli Njoku (SCSU),

Opening Remarks from the Co-Chair

Co-chair Clarke called the meeting to order at 10:05 am.

Co-chair Clarke held a moment of silence in recognition of the events which unfolded the prior day, and the anniversary of 9/11.

Roll Call

Gretchen Shugarts, Commission Analyst, called the roll. Quorum established.

Meeting Minutes Approval

Motion to accept June 2025 minutes made by Carline Charmelus and seconded by Patricia O'Rourke. Tiffany Donelson abstained from the vote as she was not present in the June meeting. Minutes approved.

Review of September 4 Health Coverage Forum

Co-Chair Clarke, Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, Executive Director

- Co-Chair Clarke thanked those who came to the Health Coverage forum at the Legislative Office Building which addressed the federal cuts to health insurance.
- Clarke gave a recap of the day highlighting the presentations by DSS Commissioner Andrea Barton Reeves, Deputy Commissioner Peter Hadler, and Access Health CT CEO, James Michel followed by remarks from Comptroller Sean Scanlon. In the final part of the forum, a panel of policy experts explored solutions the state can take to mitigate the impacts of the cuts.

- Executive Director Charmchi Goodwin also thanked those who participated and attended the forum and noted that information including slide decks of the event were sent out to attendees.
- Charmchi Goodwin then reviewed some of the information shared at the forum, particularly by DSS explaining the timeline of the changes, with some being imminent and some not scheduled to go into effect until January 2028. In addition, Charmchi Goodwin highlighted that over 5,000 lawfully present immigrants who are below 100% of the federal poverty level will lose federal premium tax credits, and therefore lose their coverage through Covered CT. Given some of the changes coming into effect quickly, Charmchi Goodwin noted that some mitigation actions may need to take place within the next few months, before the legislative session in 2026.

Racial Ethnic Impact Statements Update

Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, Executive Director

- Executive Director Charmchi Goodwin gave an update on the implementation of Racial Ethnic Impact Statements (REIS). The Commission is still in the hiring process for a Principal Analyst with final interviews having been completed this week. The Commission hopes to announce the hiring of the Principal Analyst very soon, followed by the hiring of another Analyst to assist the Principal.
- Executive Director Charmchi Goodwin explained the next steps ahead including a pilot process with mock statements on real proposed bills in the 2026 legislative session in consultation with all caucuses to flesh out the process and procedures of the operationalization of REIS. This will be followed by a formal launch in the 2027 legislative session where the guidelines will hopefully be in the joint rules adopted on the opening day.
- Executive Director Charmchi Goodwin reiterated the purpose of REIS which would be to provide an informational tool to legislators, on request, which would project if a bill would have any impact on racial disparities. The Commission is pleased that REIS has both bicameral and bipartisan support.

Carline Charmelus asked about how the Commission would determine if it would produce a REIS statement, if requested by a legislator. Charmchi Goodwin explained that the Commission will endeavor to do as many REIS as requested within the bandwidth and feasibility of the team. The pilot process will help determine the parameters of the production of the statements, and the Commission is also taking inspiration from other states' processes such as Colorado. Nothing is set in stone yet, and multiple options are on the table, as long as they are feasible.

Strategic Plan Update

Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, Executive Director

- As a recap, the strategic plan consists of policy recommendations which were derived from a community based participatory research, in collaboration with a Community Research Team, Subcommittees and UConn HDI and Commission staff.
- Executive Director Charmchi gave an update on the strategic plan explaining that we are in the final stages of executing an extension of the contract with UConn Health Disparities Institute (UConn HDI) in order to flesh out the recommendations and execute the dissemination plan.

Carline Charmelus asked about a timeline for the dissemination. Charmchi Goodwin explained that the contract execution timeline is unclear but well underway. The extension will be through November 2026

which gives ample time for dissemination.

Patricia O'Rourke acknowledged the extensive community engagement involved in the strategic plan, but noted the lack of youth participation which she hoped would be focused on in the dissemination of the plan. Charmchi Goodwin supported O'Rourke's suggestion, and recommended future conversations on how to include youth engagement.

Public Comments

- None

Good of the Order

- Co-Chair Clarke thanked the Advisory Body for their time and commitment to the Commission and noted the time and date of the next Commission meeting which will be held on Thursday, December 11, 2025, from 10-11:30am. Co-Chair Clarke also encouraged Advisory Body members to attend meetings in person if they are able as it is important to have face-to-face interaction.
- Co-Chair Clarke highlighted that there may be a special session upcoming soon, so to keep an eye on any developments which may arise.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 10:31 am.