



The Commission on  
Women, Children, Seniors, Equity & Opportunity

**CWCSEO**

Connecticut General Assembly

## **MINUTES**

### **CWCSEO ADVISORY BOARD MEETING**

**THURSDAY, MARCH 11, 2021**

**VIA ZOOM**

PRESENT: Alan Tan, Leticia Colon de Mejias, Helene Shay, Cynthia Cartier, Diane Stone, Alfonse Wright, Gladys Rivera, Penny Young, Denise Cesareo, Jordan Grossman, Antonia Moran, Myron Genel, Kim Oliver, Mui Mui Hin-McCormick, Nancy Heaton, Hilda Nieves, Joan Barere

EXCUSED: Karen Jarmoc

STAFF/INTERNS PRESENT: Steven Hernández, Werner Oyanadel, Rosemary Lopez, Denise Drummond, Michael Werner, Fellow

GUEST: Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz and Evelyn Mantilla

Meeting was called to order at 10:00 AM on Thursday, March 11, 2021.

### **WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS**

Co-Chairperson Tan welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending this meeting. He also welcomed our guest.

### **PRESENTATION**

#### **GOVERNOR'S COUNCIL ON WOMEN AND GIRLS**

LT Governor Susan Bysiewicz did a presentation on the Governor's Council on Women and Girls.

She gave a brief background on the formation of the Council

- Created by Governor Lamont in January 2019
- Council Leadership & Membership
  - Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz, Chair
  - OPM Sec. Melissa McCaw, Vice Chair



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- Members include representatives from state executive branch agencies; constitutional office; and legislative caucuses
- Subcommittees
  - Economic Opportunity & Workforce Equity
  - Education & STEAM
  - Health & Safety
  - Leadership
- State Partners
  - Steering Committee
  - Corporate Leadership Circle

They are tasked with providing a coordinated state response to issues that impact the lives of women, girls, their families, and the State of Connecticut.

She addressed the Governors Bills for 2021 Legislative Agenda – Governors Bills

- SB 883 An Act Concerning the Recommendations of the Governor's Council on Women and Girls
- SB 881 An Act Concerning Workforce Development
- HB 6445 An Act Expanding Economic Opportunity in Occupations Licensed By the Department of Consumer Protection
- HB 6449 An Act Expanding Economic Opportunity in Occupations Licensed By the Department of Public Health

Some of the Committee bills that the Council is supporting:

- SB 56 An Act Deterring Age Discrimination In Employment Applications
- SB 87 An Act Concerning Certain Protections For Group And Family Child Care Homes

She explained the four Subcommittees of the Council:

- Subcommittee on Economic Opportunity and Workforce Equity – they identify financial barriers that disproportionately hinder women and girls, including pay and work environment disparities that inhibit fair performance evaluation and advancement in the workplace and have worked in the following reports
  - Comptroller's Office Equity Reports
  - Economic Supports
  - Financial Literacy
  - Housing and Community Development Leadership Institute



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- Subcommittee on Education and STEAM – they encourage educational advancement for women and girls, particularly in the areas of science, technology, engineering, the arts and math.
  - Lt. Governor's Computing Challenge
  - Internships
  - Arts
  - Information HUB
- Subcommittee on Health and Safety – they identify health and safety issues that particularly impact women and girls and develop initiatives that support healthy lifestyles and offer physical, mental and emotional protection for women and girls affected by such matters.
  - Discussion Topics/ Information Sharing
  - MAPOC Subcommittee on Women and Children's Health
  - PROUD
- Subcommittee on Leadership – they promote women leadership in both the public and private sectors, particularly government elected and appointed officials, corporate boards and executive management, educational institutions, non-profit organizations and the media with the goal of achieving gender parity such that gender in workforce leadership proportionately represents the Connecticut population.
  - Diversity on State Boards and Commissions
  - Woomen in Leadership Panel Series
  - Employee Development & Training Opportunities/Cultural Competency
  - Affirmative Action Reports, Hiring Goals and Recruitment Strategies

The Councils upcoming meetings:

- Economic Opportunity & Workforce Equity – April 14<sup>th</sup> 3pm
- Education & STEAM – April 7<sup>th</sup> 1pm
- Health and Safety – April 5<sup>th</sup> 10am
- Leadership – April 21<sup>st</sup> 3pm
- Next full council meeting May 11<sup>th</sup> 3pm

**PRESENTATION**

**TRUE COLORS**

Evelyn Mantilla, Board President of True Colors did a presentation:



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- True Colors, is a nonprofit that offers an array of resources for LGBTQ youth over the last 25 years. Their mission is to advocate, educate and support the LGBTQ+ youth.
- Some of the programs that they are known for:
  - Mentorship program for DCF youth
  - Gay/Straight Alliance
  - Yearly Conference with 3,000 participants
- Leadership (help them develop their own leadership skills)

The future of True Colors will be taking a shift that combines supportive services, as well as creating a new future type services. The board of directors right now is working to reinvision the organization, looking for new ideas, expansion for True Colors.

Due to COVID they haven't been able to have their yearly conference that usually have 3,000 participants. They will be offering a virtual conference this year.

### **SUB COMMISSIONS REPORTS**

**Latino & Puerto Rican Sub commission** – Interim Co-Chair Colon de Mejias reported:

- They had a conversation with Mr. Julio Mendoza, Executive Director of the Spanish American Merchants Association. He provided a great summary of both support and barriers regarding PPP loans and pandemic support reaching out to the community, specifically for small businesses.
- Changing rules kept businesses from applying
  - the lack of access to computer supports and lack of PC literacy was sometimes a barrier to the application process
  - computer literacy as a very important bridge for Latino and brown and black communities to move forward, a suggestion is that the state look at developing programs that would support the needs for grants or computer-based equipment software loans.
  - larger businesses in our state are provided better and more effective support during pandemics or crisis. A suggestion is that we look at the pilot program that they were running to help small businesses do online sales.
- They are working on several legislative bill that they are working one.
- They will be hosting two Housing Summits March 23<sup>rd</sup> & 24<sup>th</sup>



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**Women's Sub commission** – Interim Co-chair Moran reported on the following:

- The sub commission invited the Women's Council on Women and Girls and are very pleased with the presentation from the LT Governor and the work that they are doing.
- The sub commission is also awarding a group of women for the they have been doing during the Pandemic. The women being highlighted this week are:
  - Lisa Konicki of Stonington CT and the President of the Ocean Community Chamber of Commerce and the Ocean Community Foundation. She helped support local businesses through monetary grants, donated equipment to meet guidelines, and marketing campaigns to generate revenue for those small businesses who were struggling to survive. She also orchestrated events to keep the community going in a COVID safe way.
  - Paster Liz of Norwalk CT, Pastor at Cornerstone Community Church – she and her church have been an absolute resource during the crisis to assist families with basic needs.
  - Mary Jane Foster, President, and CEO of the Interval House the state 's largest domestic violence agency where the demand has been greater during COVID-19.
- Not having Women's Day at the capitol this year. The closest thing they are going to come together with all the women being recognized on April 1<sup>st</sup> for a panel discussion.

**Children's Sub commission** – Ms. Oliver and Mr. Hernandez reported on the following:

- They have been focusing on Social Emotional Learning legislation in term of literacy. A lot of the focus is making the connection between family, community, and school. Also on older youth, young adult.
- There is working being done around online tobacco, trying to bring that down as well as flavored tobacco.
- Need to focus on the issues of the parents that are really trying to navigate with home schooling, and the fact that there is very little guidance.
- There is a concern for children with special needs and their accessibility.
- Conversations about next steps need to start happening. How is the Board of Education going to transition children back.
- There are two big initiatives, two big bills that are before the legislature. One is the reading bill; this bill would provide the guidance especially around reading loss and addressing the reading gap that has been exacerbated by pandemic.



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- The other one is Social and Emotional Learning, which supports well-being and mental health connection, to prevent suicide and address our adversary childhood experiences and to addressing trauma all of which have been experienced that exacerbated in this last year.

**Asian Pacific Islanders Sub commission** – Interim Co-chair Hin-McCormick reported on the following:

- They continue to have joint sub commission meetings with the African American affairs submission.
- Their sub commission is running into difficulty with attendance and participation.
- A new Yale Fellow as joined and will be helping with the API sub commission.
- They will be having a Virtual Forum on Confronting Hate: Standing Together and Responding to Violence Targeting Asian and Pacific Islander Americans on March 19<sup>th</sup>.

**African American Sub commission** – Ms. Drummond reported on behalf of the co-chair the following:

- Last month during Black History Month they hosted panel on leaders of the African American community. They addressed the issues of emotional health and well-being. They also celebrated some heroes that have made big difference.
- During the month of March, they will be posting some additional events
- March 29<sup>th</sup> Virtual Form on Diversity in our Blackness at 5pm
- They have been having conversations regarding the scholarships on how they check will be presented.

**Seniors Sub commission** – Interim Co-chair Ms. Stone reported on the following:

- The state has already studied a lot about the nursing home and managed residential care home. There have been conversations on the right to use technology. For things like virtual connections with family. There is a study bill to study the impact of COVID on older adults and it has an emphasis on long term care and manage residential care
- Ongoing concern in the governor 's budget, there was a recommendation to add an asset test to the Medicare savings program this is a program that supports people with lower incomes and paying for their out-of-pocket expenses, so they're take care of our premium's prescription drug expenses.



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### **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE**

Thanked the staff and all the Fellows for all the work everyone is doing in support of the mission of this Commission.

Appointments of board members continue to be on the forefront.

He has been working with the Office of Legislative Management to pursue filling the four vacant positions, for the children's jurisdiction, aging, Asian and Pacific Islander jurisdiction and the family's jurisdiction.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Commissioner Young moved to adjourn the meeting of March 11, 2021, adjourned at 12:00pm.  
Seconded by Commissioner Stone