



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

# CWCSEO

Connecticut General Assembly

## MINUTES

### CWCSEO ADVISORY BOARD MEETING

Thursday, October 8, 2020

10AM – 12PM

Via Zoom

Present: Alan Tan, Co-chair, Karen Jarmoc, Co-chair, Leticia Colon de Mejias, Jordan Grossman, Alphonse Wright, Diane Stone, Nancy Heaton, Penny Young, Myron Genel, Mui Mui Hin-McCormick, Joan Barere, Kim Oliver, Gladys Rivera and Denise Cesareo,

Staff Present: Steven Hernandez, Werner Oyanadel, Denise Drummond, Lucy Goicoechea-Hernandez, and Rosemary Lopez

Meeting was called to order at 10:00am on Thursday, October 8, 2020.

### WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Co-chairperson Alan Tan welcomed everyone and thanked them for attending,

### SUB COMMISSION REPORTS ON LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

**Latino & Puerto Rican Sub Commission** – Interim Chair Ms. Colon de Mejias reported on their top three legislative priorities:

1. **Employment, Food, and Shelter Insecurity Issues because of COVID-19 Crisis** – With the current pandemic many basic needs have become increasingly more pressing and less stable. The current situation has shed additional light on longstanding social economic disparities, which in our opinion are quite often connected to lack of wealth, lack of political representation, and lack of access to affordable high-quality education, and lack of access to workforce development that connect to local good paying jobs. These are basic needs, and we must plan to ensure these most basic needs are met.
2. **Support for Minority/Latino Businesses** – The pandemic has hit minority businesses hard. Leaving many small minority businesses with lack of support. We are seeing record high unemployment rates and business closures. What can we do then as a state to ensure minorities are informed on how to start and keep businesses running? How can we better connect our communities to help them access grants, low interest loans,



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and other business support to help them in their community and to heighten economic development? How can we use small businesses to lift our communities of color and increase the rate of minority social-economic success in our state?

3. **Environmental Education/Energy Efficiency Equity Justice Issues** – Strains on our local and global environment continue to rise impacting our community's health, wealth, stability, and resilience. We strongly feel that for people to be meaningfully engaged in planning for a sustainable resilient future they must have access to information that is understandable, accessible, engaging, and that empowers them to make educated choices and planning for a stable safe future. This would include information on where our energy comes from, how energy impacts our health, our environment, and our economy. This educational work should also connect to workover opportunities such as career paths, college, and training on potential career opportunities. We note specifically that in communities of color that there is a 5K-7 funding gap per student. This often leads to a lack of science-based education in communities of color. Many of these communities face additional burdens which schools are not properly equipped to handle. There has also been a shift to online learning, and in communities of color there is demonstrated lack of access to educational tools for at home learning, and a lack of access to stable online learning opportunities. It is critical that our communities have access to science based environmental and energy education so that they may help in planning their own successful futures and have a leadership voice of their own at the table.

She also wanted to let everyone know they will be having a Virtual Town Hall Conversation on Environmental Justice and the Latino Community: Why it Matters to Us tomorrow, October 9, 2020, at 4:30pm. You can join to the livestream on Facebook.

**African American Sub Commission** – Interim Chair Alphonse Wright reported on their top three legislative priorities:

1. Criminal Justice – Police Accountability, Clean Slate Reform, intervention, Job Readiness and Re-Entering Sentencing of Reform are very important, as well as Data Disaggregation.
2. Education – Opportunity and Resource Gap, College Affordability, Drop Out Retention, Intervention in retrieval as well as Minority Teacher Recruitment and better education for youth in juvenile detention centers.
3. Economic Development – Economic reinvestment in minority contracting, procurement opportunities, they feel strongly about investing in black businesses and keeping money in their communities. Building Infrastructure, non-extraction loans.



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They also felt that the Census should be placed under economic development, because there is a need to teach and inform our communities how important this is in bringing money into our communities as income disparities are the root of a lot of the problems now.

He also reported they have also been working with a ministerial group in Middletown, addressing some of the same issues. We will be meeting again to have some community events to gather some more information, so we can get community date.

**Seniors Sub Commission** – They have not elected a chair yet, Ms. Stone and Ms. Young are serving a Co-Chairs and reported on two policy areas.

1. **Funding** – Connecticut has committed rightfully to rebalancing its long-term care system from institutional to harming community based, but right now neither institutional nor home and community-based serves can be sustained without adequate investment. Rates of reimbursements that cover the costs of providing the services. Additionally, funding for home and community-based services outside of Medicaid funding, including things like; elderly nutrition, housing, and transportation are not keeping pace with the demand of a population that is aging in our communities. Complicating this is a very significant and growing workforce, workforce shortage. There is a huge workforce mission and long-term services and support. It's a training issue, it's a funding issue, it's a rate of pay issue, but it's reaching a crisis level. So, we need to join in urging the state to invest in long term services supports and home community-based services. When the state has a budget problem it's these areas that often start getting tightened and we can't afford to do that anymore.
2. **Technology Access** – Expand access to technology for all Connecticut residents including older adults, including the broadband infrastructure. Expanding opportunity and continuing opportunity for telehealth and just basic access to technology.

When they met, they invited some of the leaders on aging to the meeting to talk about all these issues. Present was AARP, Leading Age Connecticut, Connecticut Community Care and Connecticut Legal Services.

**Women's Sub Commission** – Interim Chair Ms. Antonia "Toni" Moran reported on their top legislative priorities:

1. Reinstating Health Care as a Human Right in state statute
2. Tuition free Community College access, and it should come with childcare
3. Eliminate the statute of limitations for felony sex crimes, aligning the state with the federal definitions of human trafficking



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4. Paid Medicaid expansions to include full parity for certified nurse midwives and birthing attendants

**Children's Sub Commission** – Interim Chair Mr. Mike Genel reported on their legislative priorities:

1. Focus on disproportionate impact on children of color and the poor in health, safety, education, and other indicators of success (racial and ethnic impact).
2. Long term recovery for children as a public health crisis impacting education which requires a focus on physical safety and mental health and social and emotional wellbeing in the school environment.
3. Engaging students lost to distance care and learning and focusing on those interventions that we know make an impact, such as tech care for kids, connectivity, literacy, restorative practices.
4. Addressing the needs of children in the context of family and community, focusing on language access and food, housing, workforce safety and insecurity.

**Asian and Pacific Islander Sub Commission** - Interim Chair Ms. Hin-McCormick reported that they will be meeting on Oct. 16<sup>th</sup> when they will be finalizing their legislative priorities. They have been addressing the following

1. Language Access – Just overall for their communities that English is a second language. They will be looking at some tangible action steps at their next meeting.
2. Health and Wellness Access – referring to medical providers, mental health, addiction services. It's really talking about having access for community members to be able to get services that they need.
3. Health Literacy – many community members run into barriers because they don't understand what their actual insurance policy benefits are.
4. Incorporating or developing an API curriculum for the education system

## EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S UPDATE

Mr. Hernandez reported that one of the things that the Commission has been able to do is really continue to drive public conversation round issues of specific emergency and ongoing concerns. We have runned several series of the Commission that focus on some of the issues that everyone here has already discussed.

We also been working very closely with members of the legislature to home in on language for policy and assisting legislators directly on their work moving into this next session.



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Mr. Hernandez anticipates seeing movement in filling the four vacant positions soon after election.

He thanked his staff for everything that they've been able to do despite all the complexities that they too might be facing during these difficult times.

### **OTHER AND NEW BUSINESS**

Co-chair Jarmoc recommends that when all the priorities are put together that the commission looks at everything through a race and equity lens.

Co-chair Tan informed everyone that the co-chairs are working to get the sub commission chairs together to make sure that we can probably move action items along, so that action follows the discussion that we have as advisory board members.

Mr. Hernandez informed that Andrea Barton Reeves who is organizing the Connecticut Paid Leave is interested in speaking to the Commission to provide us with an update. We will invite her to one of our full board meetings.

### **ADJOURNMENT**

Meeting of October 8, 2020, adjourned at 11:45am.