

Commission on Women, Children, Seniors, Equity and Opportunity Advisory Board Meeting Minutes

Date: April 23, 2025
Time: 2:30pm – 4:00 pm
Location: Zoom

Advisory Board Members in Attendance: Hilda Nieves, Joan Barere, Tiheba Victoria Hercules, Nancy Heaton, Alan Tan, Penny Young, Mui Mui Hin-McCormick, Syliva Ho, and Ada Fenick.

Advisory Board Members Absent/Excused: Clifton Watson, Kunwar Umesh Vig, Liz Bumbgardner, Bruni Pizarro, Christy Kovel, Tiana Victoria Hercules, Gladys Rivera, Karen Jarmoc, Madeline Granato, Denise Cesareo

Staff Attended: Yukiyo Iida, Denise Drummond, Thomas Nuccio, Megan Baker, Melvette Hill, Werner Oyanadel, Michael Werner, Christian Duborg, Rosemary Lopez

Call to Order: Co-Chair Alan Tan called the meeting to order at 2:34 PM

Welcoming and Convening Remarks from Co-Chairs and Executive Director: Co-Chair Alan Tan opened the meeting by acknowledging the challenges of maintaining quorum and suggested that, due to lack of quorum for today's meeting, votes would need to take place via email due to lack of participation. Executive Director Melvette Hill emphasized the importance of improving internal communications, recognizing the voluntary nature of board member roles.

Approval of Minutes: No previous meeting minutes were submitted for approval.

Voting on 2025 Board Meeting Dates – Melvette Hill proposed several upcoming dates for Advisory Board activities. Members agreed to confirm these dates via an email vote.

- Thursday, June 26 | 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM | Location TBD
- July 2025 | New Member Onboarding (Date TBD, In-Person)
- Friday, September 12 | 9:30 AM – 12:30 PM | Board Retreat (In-Person)
- Thursday, November 20 | 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM | Hybrid Meeting

Updates were shared on several upcoming events:

- **Autism Awareness Day** will take place all day on **Thursday, April 28th** at the State Capitol. This year's theme, *"Transitioning,"* highlights the key life changes experienced by autistic individuals—from school and higher education to employment and independent living. The Commission will also spotlight the critical needs and rights of individuals with profound autism and their families.
- An **Immigration Enforcement Roundtable** will be held on **Wednesday, April 30th**. The event brings together state leaders, legal experts, immigration advocates, and community members to examine how changes in federal immigration enforcement policies are affecting Connecticut's families, schools, and municipalities. The roundtable will explore legal considerations, community challenges, and the role of state leadership in protecting the rights and dignity of all residents—regardless of immigration status. This event was organized following a unanimous vote by the CWCSEO Advisory Board in January.

- On **Friday, May 9th at 1:00 PM**, CWCSEO will host a panel discussion titled ***“What Happens When Public Data Disappears?”*** at the Legislative Office Building (Room 310) and via Zoom. The event will examine the impact of data erasure and emphasize why data integrity and availability matter to everyone—not just experts. Panelists will highlight Connecticut’s leadership in preserving digital records and ensuring evidence-based governance.
- On **Saturday, May 3rd from 10:00 AM to 1:30 PM**, CWCSEO and the UConn Health Disparities Institute will present ***“Real Talk: Breaking the Silence on Menopause”*** at the Legislative Office Building. This empowering event will begin with brunch and social time to foster community connections, followed by a screening of *“The M Factor,”* a film exploring the lived realities of menopause. The event will conclude with an interactive panel featuring health experts, advocates, and women sharing their personal experiences. Partners include the UConn Institute for Collaboration on Health, Intervention, and Policy, the Aurora Women and Girls Foundation, and The Farmington Valley CT Chapter of The Links, Incorporated.
- **Immigrant Day at the Capitol** will take place on **Wednesday, May 7th**, from 2:00 PM to 4:00 PM in Room 310 of the State Capitol. Co-hosted by the Commission, this annual celebration honors immigrants who have made lasting contributions to Connecticut. Honorees are recognized for overcoming challenges and for their positive impact in their communities and professions.
- On Thursday, May 8th, during **National Small Business Week, Chinese American AAPI Restaurant Month, and Asian Heritage Month**, the Commission will host a press conference in Room 310 of the Capitol. The event will celebrate multiculturalism and spotlight the economic contributions of Asian restaurants in Connecticut. The Secretary of the State will participate, and the event will feature the soft launch of what is expected to become an annual celebration of Asian Restaurant Month.

Legislative Updates

The Board discussed ongoing concerns regarding federal funding cuts and their potential impact on the Commission. Board Member Hilda Nieves expressed concern, but Executive Director Melvette Hill informed members that the Commission remains secure through state funding and has received its full budget request for staffing and operations. The Governor’s Office is also actively monitoring how federal cuts may affect communities across the state.

Additionally, rebranding discussions are underway as part of an effort to strengthen the Commission’s public image while continuing its core mission centered on equity and opportunity.

Melvette Hill highlighted the Commission’s innovative legislative work, particularly the contributions of ten legislative fellows representing diverse backgrounds and fields. She shared recent examples such as proposals involving 3D printing for tiny homes and analysis of artificial intelligence’s impact on women in the workforce, which sparked significant interest among legislators. She noted that while some legislators may initially overlook these topics, they often return with follow-up questions, demonstrating growing engagement.

Hill also acknowledged the Commission’s role in promoting cost-effective policy solutions during an especially active legislative session. Both Hill and Co-Chair Alan Tan reaffirmed the Commission’s non-partisan identity and stressed the importance of civil, productive dialogue in advancing Connecticut’s policy landscape.