

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

Date: June 26, 2025  
Time: 10:30 am – 12:00 pm  
Location: Legislative Office Building Hearing Room 2A, Zoom

**Advisory Board Members in Attendance:** Hilda Nieves, Jordan Grossman, Joan Barere, Nancy Heaton, Alan Tan, Syliva Ho, Gladys Rivera, and Ada Fenick.

**Advisory Board Members Absent/Excused:** Clifton Watson, Kunwar Umesh Vig, Liz Bumbgardner, Bruni Pizarro, Christy Kovel, Tiana Victoria Hercules, Karen Jarmoc, Madeline Granato, Denise Cesareo, Penny Young, and Mui Mui Hin-McCormick

**Staff Attended:** Yukiyo Iida, Thomas Nuccio, Melvette Hill, Michael Werner, Christian Duborg, Rosemary Lopez

**Call to Order:** Co-Chair Alan Tan called the meeting to order at 10:33 AM

**Welcome, Opening Remarks, Acknowledgements:** Co-Chair Alan Tan opens the meeting by apologizing for the technical issues with the camera for those on zoom. He states we will reshuffle the agenda slightly so acknowledgements can happen once Karen joins. This meeting will primarily focus on the work done by the Commission staff during this legislative session. Minutes will also be held for later in the meeting due to the lack of a quorum.

### **CWCSEO Staff Legislative Session Reflections:**

Executive Director Melvette Hill says the team will talk through the big bills that they worked on during the last legislative session. TJ discusses two language access bills that the team viewed as a first step. One passed the House largely along party lines but did not receive a vote in the Senate.

TJ and Yukiyo discuss HB 5001/PA 25-67, HB 7163/PA 25-1, and SB 1/PA 25-93, which combined represent a “comprehensive reform of special education.” They explain a few of the individual provisions that the Commission worked on, such as prohibiting increased charges for special education services, a rate schedule for direct service provisions, the development of a special education family guide, creation of various grants to promote in-district placements to minimize the number of students being transported out of district and streamlining of due process hearings.

Rosemary discusses HB 7236/PA 25-139 and SB 1438, which provide protections for victims of human trafficking and sexual assault and would have prohibited Female Genital Mutilation and Cutting (FGMC), respectively. The former includes a number of provisions, such as adding the Department of Transportation to the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) council, sexual assault and trafficking in persons victim status as protected classes under CHRO’s anti-discrimination laws, establishes an affirmative defense for those accused of misdemeanors that occurred while they were a minor and participated in the offense as a result of being a victim of human trafficking, and allows mandatory human trafficking awareness to be given in

any format. This bill passed both the House and the Senate and is awaiting the Governor's signature. The FGMC bill did pass out of Committee but did not receive a vote in the Senate. In the coming year the Commission hopes to strengthen the provision to meet what survivors are asking for.

Michael Werner discusses HB 6771/PA 26-16, which was an Aging Committee Omnibus Bill which included a number of provisions, such as long-term care facility employment and background checks, an Alzheimer's Disease and Dementia task force, transfers and discharges in residential care homes, health insurance coverage for biomarker testing, tuition waivers for nursing home residents, nursing home transfers, a residential care home working group, and waiting list exemptions. There were three concepts (spousal compensation, expanding oral health services, and expanded support for the long-term care ombudsman's office) that were considered by the legislature but not ultimately passed.

Christian Duborg discusses HB 6089 and the various bills that its contents were added into later (HB 7021, HB 7273, and SB 1418). These bills contained all 11 recommendations the Commission made in its 2024 Report on the State of Food Insecurity in Connecticut. All but one of the provisions did not ultimately pass, with the exception being that the CT-NAP program for local food pantries received a 200% funding increase in FY26 and a further 99% increase in FY27.

TJ Nuccio discusses HB 7160/PA 25-159 on Denise's behalf, which authorizes the creation of a "Yellow Envelope" for individuals with cognitive or physical disabilities to facilitate communication with first responders. The bill also creates a training requirement for first responders around these envelopes.

Melvette Hill discusses SB 1473/PA 25-63 on Denise's behalf, which requires Medicaid coverage for FDA-approved gene therapies to treat sickle cell disease. Melvette also discusses HB 5002/PA 25-49 on the Werner's behalf, which would have enacted a number of provisions designed to improve housing availability and affordability. The bill passed both the House and Senate but was vetoed by the Governor.

#### **Civic Engagement Standing Committee (CESC) update:**

Joan Barere shares that the Commission has been working with a youth leadership group to create a Youth Advisory Council (YAC). The group did undertake activities without being formally created or the knowledge of the Commission that could be interpreted as lobbying. The group has agreed to pause their activities and work with the Commission to better understand the "guardrails" of working under the Commission. Joan and Commission staff have been reviewing their material and working with prospective YAC's chair, though she is leaving the state to attend university in the fall.

Barere notes that while she is the appointed chair of this Standing Committee, it currently has no other members. While members do not need to go through the normal process, Joan states that she would like support from the Board in identifying and inviting prospective committee members.

Sylvia Ho notes that she is a member and leader in the CT Bar Association, which has expressed interest in collaborating to provide both their youth group and ours to programming around the legislative process, the bill of rights, etc.. She suggests that several of the members of the Bar Association could be interested in being appointed as committee members.

Ada Fenick notes that she recently met with a youth civic engagement group at the CCA that are doing something similar, and they could be added to our YAC.

Alan Tan notes that he and Karen Jarmoc can appoint people to the standing committee, and they've been interested in collaborating with municipal leaders. Melvette Hill encourages members to reach out to Joan with further ideas and suggestions.

#### **Board Appointments Updates & Recommendations:**

Hill states that two new appointments have been made to the board, one to the Women's Subcommission and one to the African American Subcommission. Now that session is over, the Commission is actively engaging with legislative leaders to fill remaining vacancies but is open to

#### **Other Business:**

Yukiyo Iida summarizes the work of PLTI and CLTI this year, noting that there were 8 PLTI sites and 4 CLTI ones, producing 95 PLTI graduates and 54 CLTI graduates. Each PLTI graduate completed an individual community project, and each CLTI site produced a group community project. Yukiyo also notes that some of this work is funded through the Parent Trust Fund, which was restored as an individual line item (instead of being grouped in with other grants) in the FY26-27 budget and the Fund received a slight annual amount increase to \$350,000.

Hill shares that the Commission staff is currently in the process of planning community listening sessions across the state (in-person and virtually, in English and Spanish). More updates will be provided shortly.

Tan announces that at the end of this meeting there will be two board members departing from the Commission, thanking Gladys Rivera and Madeline Granato for their service to the Commission and wishing them the best moving forward. Melvette thanks Gladys for her long service and tells her she is always welcome at the Commission. Gladys states it's been an honor to be a part of the Commission and work with staff and other board members, and while she may be retiring, she is always eager to support the work.

#### **Closing Remarks:**

Tan notes that HB 5001 was signed by the governor on Monday, and that the Advisory Board Retreat will occur in September and include the newly appointed Board members who will start on July 1<sup>st</sup>. He also states that he is looking forward to discussion about recommendations and priorities for next year. Subcommissions will be meeting throughout the summer.