

# Racial Equity in Public Health Commission

Co-Chairs: Claudio Gualtieri, OPM Designee & Tekisha Dwan Everette, PhD, Executive Director Health Equity Solutions

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## Regular Commission Meeting Minutes

Monday, May 23<sup>rd</sup>

10:00 AM-11:00 AM

Via Teams

**Members Present:** Co-Chair Claudio Gualtieri, Co-Chair Tekisha Everette, Astread Ferron-Poole, Carline Charmelus, Chavon Hamilton, David Reyes for Heather Aaron, Hilda Santiago, Chlo-Anne Bobrowski for John Frassinelli, Katie Dykes, Kean Zimmerman, Lorenzo Jones for Kenyatta Muzzani, Kyle Abercrombie, Leonard Jahad, Marina Marmolejo, Melissa Santos, Tiffany Donelson, Vannessa Dorantes, Victoria Veltri

**Guests Present:** Incoming Executive Director for the Commission Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, Sandra Gill, Planning Consultant, from the Department of Public Health, and Dawn Lambert, Co-leader, Community Options Unit Karri Filek, Manager Kris Noam, Ph.D., MSc Health Research Scientist, Beacon Health Options Susan Smith, Director, Business Intelligence + Analytics, for the Department of Social Services.

**Members Absent:** Craig Burns, Diana Reyes, Jonathan Steinberg, Mary Daugherty Abrams, Steven Hernández, Tammy Hendricks, Travis Simms

### Welcome & Roll Call

Everette called the meeting to order at 10:03 AM and announced the meeting was being broadcast on CT-N. Gualtieri reviewed the agenda and then asked for attendance to be taken.

### Public Comment

Gualtieri stated that any remarks made had to be limited to 3 minutes per speaker. There were no comments from the public.

### Welcome to Incoming Executive Director

Gualtieri briefly recapped the hiring process for the Executive Director position as was discussed during the May 9<sup>th</sup> Special Meeting.

Incoming Executive Director Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, MPH, addressed the Commission. She had been unanimously confirmed by the Commission during a special meeting on May 9<sup>th</sup>, 2022. She said that she would officially be starting in this role on Friday, June 3<sup>rd</sup>. She would be reviewing the various reports and meeting materials that the Commission had produced since first meeting. In the first few months, she indicated that she would be meeting with commission members individually to learn more about their perspectives and vision for the Commission. She also indicated that starting to work on the strategic plan, with both short term and long term goals, was the most immediate task in the first few months.

### Meeting Minutes Approval

A motion was made by Veltri and seconded by Abercrombie to approve meeting minutes from both the Commission's Regular Meeting that was held on March 28<sup>th</sup> and Special Meeting that was held on May 9<sup>th</sup>. The motion passed unanimously on a voice vote.

### **Guest Speaker Panel: Department of Public Health & Department of Social Services**

The Commission hosted guest presenters, Sandra Gill, Planning Consultant, for the Department of Public Health and Dawn Lambert, Co-leader, Community Options Unit, Karri Filek, Manager, Kris Noam, Ph.D., MSc Health Research Scientist, Beacon Health Options, and Susan Smith, Director, Business Intelligence + Analytics, for the Department of Social Services.

Gill's presentation provided an update on Healthy CT 2025: State Health Improvement Plan (SHIP). She explained that SHIP is a strategic plan that gives guidance to health departments, community partners, and organizational/agency stakeholders for improving the health of the population. The seven focus areas for the 2020 SHIP were 1. Maternal, Infant & Child Health, 2. Environmental Health, 3. Chronic Disease, 4. Infectious Disease, 5. Injury & Violence Prevention, 6. Mental Health & Substance Abuse, and 7. Health Systems. The four focus areas for the 2025 SHIP include 1. Access to Health Care, 2. Economic Stability, 3. Healthy Food & Housing, and 4. Community Strength & Resilience. The presentation continued to outline the framework; the development of goals, objectives, and strategies; data challenges, and next steps. The full PowerPoint presentation is included with these minutes.

The presentation from the DSS panel of speakers was focused on Connecticut Housing Engagement and Supports Services (CHESS). They provided the history and development on the CHESS Program, explained the use of the Combined Comorbidity Index in the program's analysis, and how they operationalize the program. The panel also presented on analytics and equity related to the data that DSS collects and maintains. The full PowerPoint presentation given by the panel is also included with these minutes.

### **Subcommittee Updates**

#### *Criminal Justice Subcommittee*

##### ▪ **Overview:**

- The Criminal Justice Subcommittee has met five times since being established by the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health (CREPH). Work began by reviewing language in *An Act Equalizing Comprehensive Access to Mental, Behavioral and Physical Health Care in Response to the Pandemic* ([Public Act 21-35](#)) establishing the CREPH. The subcommittee understands its goals to include providing analysis and recommendations to the CREPH, particularly the executive director and staff, regarding racial disparities in juvenile and criminal justice systems in Connecticut, their impacts on health and well-being of individuals and families, and strategies to reduce these disparities.
- After receiving greater clarity on the subcommittee's charge, members sought a lay of the land to become familiar with ongoing research and projects related to reducing racial disparities in the criminal justice system. To that end, the subcommittee received a presentation from Andrew Clark, executive director of the University of Connecticut Institute for Municipal and Regional Policy (IMRP), and staff. IMRP covered the array of relevant projects relating to racial disparities in the criminal justice system that it covers, including but not limited to the CT Racial Profiling Prohibition Project, the racial disparities in sentencing under the Sentencing Commission, support provided to the Commission on Racial and Ethnic Disparities, and various criminal justice research projects. IMRP's presentation helped the subcommittee appreciate the need, for the sake of efficiency and maximizing the impact of the CREPH's work, to draw on available expertise, research, and projects in the state to reduce racial disparities in the criminal justice system.

- Dr. Burns, also a member of the subcommittee, briefed fellow members on initial discussions within the Connecticut Department of Correction (DOC) to further develop and examine metrics to capture health and social factors by demographics among the population incarcerated in state correctional facilities. Collecting and analyzing these data could help inform the CREPH's work on the health impacts of racial disparities. The following were among the topics the subcommittee discussed: how to capture a wide breadth of health and social factors, what to measure quantitatively versus qualitatively, whether to focus on subpopulations (such as high-need individuals heavily utilizing correctional health care service), whether to prioritize data that already have been entered as electronic case management system compared to data that will need to be collected, and what non-health and -social data to request.
- **Planning:**
  - Future subcommittee meetings are expected to include presentations from additional subject matter experts, agencies and organizations, and others who can help inform members of ongoing strategies and efforts to reduce racial disparities in the criminal justice system. The intent is for these presentations to generate contact information, reports, and overviews of prior and ongoing studies that will be provided to the CREPH. Examples of presenters expected to attend subcommittee meetings include but are not limited to:
    - The Office of Policy and Management Criminal Justice Policy and Planning Division regarding the ongoing development of the Equity Dashboard, which will present analysis of disparities in the juvenile justice system.
    - Dr. Danielle Cooper from the University of New Haven and Erika Nowakowski from the Tow Youth Justice Institute regarding the Juvenile Justice Policy Oversight Committee's strategic plan and racial-and-ethnicity-disparities-reduction goal; an ongoing health, housing, and education study underway, and subcommittee structure with focus on racial disparities.
    - Dr. Lisa Puglisi, the Director of Yale Transitions Clinic regarding their work providing primary care to justice-involved individuals released from incarceration. This includes providing support to individuals with managing chronic health conditions and substance use disorder through peer community health workers.
    - Melinda L. Johnson, the Director, Community Engagement and Advocacy at the YWCA Hartford Region regarding their organization, programming, and advocacy. The YWCO is able to provide a community-based perspective to inform the work and recommendations of the subcommittee.
  - Continued discussions, collection of information, and receipt of presentations will help the subcommittee develop resource and recommendations to be submitted to the CREPH. The subcommittee hopes that its efforts will help the commission achieve its objectives related to addressing racial disparities in the criminal and juvenile justice system.

## *Public Health Subcommittee*

- **Overview**
  - Currently, the Public Health Subcommittee continues to conduct a landscape analysis of the various indicators related to public health to then use as benchmarks to measure progress. The subcommittee has selected an initial set of measures, and committee members are reviewing the recommendations and providing feedback.
- **Current Public Health Subcommittee Priorities**
  - *Identifying indicators to create benchmarks to measure progress:* Health Equity Solutions staff identified and collected reports and data that are available online on topics such as disparities in access to health

insurance, education, maternal and child health, behavioral health, social determinants of health, and chronic disease rates. Health Equity Solutions organized these indicators into the categories of education, physical health, and environmental health. The subcommittee narrowed down the indicators within those categories based on what we will explore further and that we wish to develop benchmarks for.

- Subcommittee members have been asked to review the recommended indicators to finalize the set.
- With the support of Health Equity Solutions, the subcommittee will explore the data sets available to establish the baseline and for ongoing monitoring of the health indicators.
- *Identifying agencies and organizations to present their organization's data at future meetings.* The subcommittee has received presentations from the department of health regarding maternal health and oral health indicators.
- For future meetings, the subcommittee will consider inviting guest additional speakers from various state agencies to elaborate on the indicators that are chosen so that we may gain a deeper understanding of what may be possible when deciding on how to create benchmarks for them.

▪ **Goals for the Summer and Fall**

- Finalize the health indicators.
- Confirm the data sets available to support developing a baseline and for ongoing monitoring of the indicators.

### *Zoning Subcommittee*

- The Zoning Subcommittee of the Racial Equity in Public Health Commission has been meeting on a biweekly cadence since formed in January.
- To date, the subcommittee has spent time familiarizing themselves with the enabling legislation and working toward defining their charge.
- The subcommittee felt it was important to hear from stakeholders in the zoning space, and they have had DesegregateCT attend a subcommittee meeting to hear about their work, and plan to meet with additional organizations and entities whose focus is on zoning in Connecticut.
- At a recent subcommittee meeting, members heard from a representative of the CT Chapter of the American Planning Association.
- Lastly, the Partnership for Strong Communities is working with Trinity College's Master of Arts in Public Policy program and participants in the Public Policy Practicum class. These students produced a report and presented their findings to the subcommittee, which will be included in our semi-annual report:
  - Examining the impact of zoning restrictions on the creation of housing disparities and how such disparities impact public health.
  - Conducting a literature review of existing research on the impacts of zoning on public health disparities & data from the state health department.
  - Comparing demographically similar municipalities in Connecticut that have been zoned differently and have thus resulted in differing public health outcomes.
- Going forward, the subcommittee would like to continue to hear from the public and key stakeholders, with the goals of studying the impact of zoning on racial equity and public health, supporting collaboration in the space, and contributing to a comprehensive strategic plan.

### **Discussion on Equity Focused Legislation being considered during the 2022 Session**

Due to time constraints, this agenda item was not taken up during the meeting.

**Good of the Order**

Due to time constraints, this agenda item was not taken up during the meeting.

**Next Steps & Adjournment**

Commission members should expect to hear from the new ED about one-to-one meetings and details of the next full Commission meeting. In the interim, subcommittees will continue to meet.

Gualtieri adjourned the meeting at 11:35 A.M.