



Bryan P. Hurlburt
Commissioner

**STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Office of the Commissioner**



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**Connecticut Department of Agriculture Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Working Group
Access to Secure Land Tenure**

Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, November 15, 2021
11:00AM-12:00PM

Was held virtually
Meeting Recording Here: [Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion - Dropbox](#)

Members Present: Ashley Stallworth, Anwar Ahmad, Chelsea Gazillo, Zania Johnson, Dominick Grant

Members Absent: Shawn Sims, Richard Myers, Latha Swamy

Public Present: Will O'Meara, Luis Vega

DoAg Staff: Cyrena Thibodeau, Holly Lalime, Kayleigh Royston

1. Welcome and Call to Order- Meeting was called to order by Dominick Grant at 11:08AM

2. New Business

a. Presentation/discussion with Kayleigh Royston about DOAG's legislative process

Kayleigh discussed with the group the legislative process and timeline at DOAG. She explained that the Department works closely with stakeholders to review legislation. In August/September the Department will draft its legislative package which is submitted to OPM by October 1st. OPM and the Governors office will provide feedback to that package in November/December. The package is submitted to the legislature prior to the session beginning in February. This is typically a nine-month process from start to finish. Kayleigh's role then is to communicate with legislators and stakeholders about the Department's package. Kayleigh explained that the legislative process is typically long and arduous. Passing new legislation can often take years.

Kayleigh answered questions about the differences between a long and short session. She explained that budgetary items are run through the long session.

Kayleigh answered questions about what happened once a bill is proposed through DOAG's legislative package. She answered that most of the Department's bills are run through the environment committee. After the bill is reviewed it goes through a public hearing process. Public hearings are a time for the industry to come out and provide their feedback. DOAG will also provide testimony on bills that are not their own. The bill is then brought to a vote and if it's voted out, it might be referred to another committee if it has joint jurisdictions.

Once all committees have voted it will go to a vote in the house and senate and then to the Governor's Office.

Kayleigh answered questions about budget allocations to new and existing programs. She answered that DOAG goes in front of the appropriations committee to advocate for its budget early on in the session. If a change in an allocation is being made to a program or if a new program is being proposed, DOAG works with the committee and legislators to ensure sufficient funding is available. Sometimes programs will die if there is not funding for it.

Chelsea Gazillo gave the group insight about funding sources for DOAG programs (Community Investment Act, bonding, general allocations). That information can be found on the OPM web page. <https://portal.ct.gov/OPM/Bud-Budgets/2022-2023-Biennial-Budget/FY-2022-2023-Biennial-Budget>

Cyrena Thibodeau reminded the group of the DEI timeline. Sub working groups will present their recommendations to the Core Working Group in October 2022 and the Core Working group will release its final recommendations by March or April of 2023.

b. Cyrena Thibodeau discussed what topics and programs the other sub working groups are reviewing and discussing

Other groups are looking at DOAG grant programs, the possibility of set-aside funding, the need for farmer support with business plans, conservation practices and additional support and training in that area, making resources more available, the WIC program, and the FMNP program. Cyrena will provide the group with a debrief document shortly.

3. Public Comment- No public comment.

4. Next Steps-

- a. Start identifying key areas of focus for the group.
- b. Review of what the Farmland Access Working Group (FLAWG) is focusing on. FLAWG is a subgroup of the Working Lands Alliance.

5. Adjourn- Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM by Dominick Grant.

Respectfully submitted, Holly Lalime, Env. Analyst, November 15, 2021.