

Governor's Council on Women and Girls
Leadership Subcommittee

Meeting Minutes

October 7, 2020 – 10:00 a.m. – 11:00 a.m.

Microsoft Teams Teleconference Meeting

1. Call to Order

Secretary McCaw, OPM called the meeting to order at 10:02 a.m.

Secretary McCaw began the meeting by reviewing the mission statement. She then went on to confirm attendance for the teleconference meeting.

2. Update from Work Group #1: Diversify Representation on Boards and Commissions by Shannon Wegele, Chief of Staff, SOTS

The group contemplated what to put forward as actionable steps for policy regarding racial and gender diversity. Some steps discussed were community outreach and what caucuses can meet to encourage action. Policies need to be approved to move forward at this time. Secretary McCaw asked about clarity of policy or if they were thinking of something broader. Ms. Wegele would like feedback on proposals to move forward and see what direction to go in. She wants strategic conversations that move in one direction. It is important to look at Boards and Commissions that are all male and all white. Wegele mentioned that they need to see what we are working towards to make community outreach efforts valuable. It might be important to look at licensing in order to investigate different types of constituencies to find the best avenues. There needs to be some buy-in for appointing authorities to be open to change and diversity.

The Secretary asked that based on the work that has been done, are there tiers that have the following: all male and all white, some diversity, etc. It would be helpful to see the tiers to bring to the Governor's team to expedite

this. She mentioned that Mary Glassman could be an asset to help move forward for next steps as she is filling the vacancy in Boards and Commissions.

At this time, it is important to look at what is needed from a resource perspective to move forward. Ms. Wegele stated that they need to diversify recruitment at the forefront of cultivation efforts. It is a multiple tier answer:

1. Need staff and volunteer support to build lists and hold group events to get more ideas to break out of this “bubble” of recruiting. The appointing authority often selects candidates that they know already, and we need to break that selection process. We need to engage more candidates which will require and encourage us to stretch our networks.
2. For long term, we propose a couple of ideas for legislation and appointing authorities need to look at this allocation themselves. We really want to cultivate diverse authorities, so we need to invest in this.
3. There needs to be a permanent place where strategic outreach can continually occur. The Secretary of the State’s office might be the ideal place for this longer term, as they already have some similar duties.

Christine Shaw stated that nine women, including two people of color have been added to the Board of Directors. Rather than push for certain appointments of people of color and women, it would mean more to change the perspective of companies’ positions when it comes to selecting candidates for roles. Commitment to the pool of participants including diversity from the start means that there is true, equal opportunity, even if a woman or someone of color is not always chosen. This is a very important first step. Ms. Wegele agreed and believes that this is the right direction for achieving this diversity. However, it is still important to focus on the timeline regarding goals to achieving this diversity. They also will want to see the data so that they can identify which Boards and Commissions are excelling with diversity and which may need more assistance to succeed.

Ellen Boynton, Office of Multicultural Healthcare Equity at DHMAS, recommended making this a statewide commitment because it is hugely important, and we have her support for this. Looking at hiring is a huge

piece of this and having accountability from each aspect is important. Nicholas Hermes is also in support, especially with the mindset that getting the pool to be diverse in the beginning is half the battle. There will be a lot value in developing this. Christine Shaw stated that the Rooney Rule shows that it doesn't require the selected candidate to be diverse per se, but it provides the diverse pool from the start that will lead to a more diverse workforce over time. Secretary McCaw mentioned that an Executive Order could also be beneficial for this. We need to show the importance of this and can have the Governor follow up with communication to all agencies to strongly suggest taking action.

The idea of the network and tasking the Commissioners to build their networks would be beneficial. The question of do we have a central location to post open board seats was raised, and Shannon Wegele stated that we do not have it at this time. It has been added to the legislation so that we can build this list of vacancies and what the qualifications would be. If we are going to be transparent with this, we must have this infrastructure so that people can really evaluate what the qualifications are for what they would like to apply for. We also need to know who the appointing authority is for each of these positions. The Governor's office and Legislative leaders have this, but it needs to be organized and formatted. Nan Birdwhitsell stated that the Department of Administrative Services' website has this list of vacancies and it is atrocious. If you are not a part of the State, you would never know how to use this site or where to start. The General Public would be completely discouraged to use this, and it does not even list the qualifications, or the agency associated with these designees. It would be helpful to investigate this, as it needs to be attractive so that we can encourage interest. We can reach out to John Vittner for help with this.

Commissioner Andrew Mais stated that it is important to make the process better and understand how to market this to the general public. The Rooney Rule is fine to have at the beginning but then it becomes more of a check the box exercise towards the end, which is something to keep in mind moving forward

3. *Update from Workgroup #2: Women in Leadership by Secretary Melissa McCaw, OPM*

Secretary McCaw informed the group that the panelists are confirmed, and we have received the Zoom link for the invite this morning. The final invite with the link and flyer would be sent out after the subcommittee meeting. We would also be sending it to all superintendents so that they can also capitalize on involvement and she encourage subcommittee members to forward the invitation as well.

The confirmed panelists are as follows:

- Dr. Zulma Toro, President of Central Connecticut State University
- Dr. Leslie Torres-Rodriguez, Superintendent of Hartford Public Schools
- Dr. Elsa Nunez, President of Eastern Connecticut State University
- Evelyn Trinidad-DeJesus, RN, Medical Surgical Intensive Care Unit Nurse Manager at St. Francis Hospital and Medical Center

The co-moderator for the event will be Lena Rodriguez, President of the Community Renewal Team (CRT).

4. *Update from Workgroup #3: Employee Development and Training – Cultural Competency by Deputy Commissioner Nick Hermes, DAS and Deputy Commissioner Jodi Hill-Lilly, DCF*

Deputy Commissioner Nick Hermes, DAS, shared the team had met twice since the last subcommittee meeting. They have been able to assign the Statement of Work (SOW) with Linked- In Learning and a purchase order is being processed as the DAS business office. They have a lot of communicating to do about Linked-In Learning, and a draft communication is due to be sent out.

In terms of Diversity Inclusion, they have met with DAS procurement to coordinate a soon to be developed RFP and have internally appointed a small ADHOC group to draft an SOW. It is for a statewide DEI contract so that agencies can pull from a singular source so that there are consistent definitions, contacts, and philosophies. The goal for completion of the draft is by the end of this month.

Christine Shaw posed the question of will there be diversity training for any Federal contractors, and if that would impact your work at all. They do intend to have a discussion with their legal counsel, which are just initial thoughts again. President Trump's Executive Order really ceases those activities in Federal Agencies but nevertheless, they are exploring them. It is understood that it applies to Federal Contractors too, but the group would be interested to know what the legal counsel advises. Hopefully the team can give us some clarity going forward.

5. Update from Work Group # 4: Affirmative Action Review & Effective Recruitment Strategies by Christine Shaw, Assistant Treasurer and Attorney Claire Coleman, OPM Undersecretary of Legal Affairs

Attorney Claire Coleman, Undersecretary for Legal Affairs shared that there are a lot of layers to this issue, starting with current statutory framework. They are working with CHRO and then looking at the legislation down the line, but first need to do a deep analysis of where we are. Currently, they are asking BCG to also assist with this. They need skillsets as the retirement cliff approaches. They are working with CHRO collaboratively to get some suggestions, but they are helping with some of the benchmarking and seeing how we can benefit.

Secretary McCaw stated that we should be very passionate about this. If we find that the data is the same and it's not a problem with the old data, what are the next steps? The opportunity within statutory framework to address diversity goals can run counter to the agency goals. Our team thinks that there is a lot of opportunity in the current statutory framework. Stating with the current framework, and as we continue discussions with CHRO, there might be more legislative suggestions, which includes the work of the BCG.

Claire informed us that they are using outdated data but can use workforce parity as a framework. Title VII of the Civil Rights Act lists equal employment opportunity and prohibition against discrimination, so it can be used to rectify the lack of diversity in the workforce.

They still have a lot of questions, which include asking the Department of Labor and Office of Policy and Management data teams if unemployment

plays into discrimination and can it be removed. Unfortunately, the legal framework is not ideal at this moment.

Christine Shaw wants to address next steps. Most of the work from this subcommittee is skewed because of the age of the data (20 years). The Data Analytics Team is so important because they can better show the opportunities to expand the data and the pool. The preparation of reports is very labor intensive, so there are a lot of resources, time, and energy going into this. Even if the methodology can be improved, it would be a major win. There is a widespread consensus that improvements can and should be made.

Melissa McCaw pointed out that we would absolutely be remiss if we didn't set the bar higher considering what is happening in society today, especially if only a report can come out of this. It is important to remain optimistic to leave a mark to show the workforce represents the people we serve.

Christine Shaw suggested that establishing a partnership with CHRO to do a deeper dive, which can help answer some of these questions. We want to be sensitive of the efforts of other stakeholders and mindful and respectful of past efforts. One of the things that can be interesting is that there could be a new taskforce that is excited and fresh but could be covering things that a previous taskforce already attempted.

6. Legislative Proposals Update

The Age Discrimination and Hiring Bill will be re-submitted.

Shannon Wegele has submitted a new proposal, which has seven key objectives:

1. Specifies a specific timeline to achieve gender and racial diversity on state boards and commissions that actually reflects the population of Connecticut.
2. Creates a policy that prevents the possibility of all-male, all-white boards by providing the Gov with an additional appointment in that scenario.

3. Elevates the voices of an organization that represent women or people of color by requiring their suggestions for appointments to be given consideration.
4. Establishes an institutional commitment to recruitment of diverse candidates by creating a permanent office of Community Outreach at SOTS.
5. The Secretary of the State is also required to create a working group to ensure that outreach efforts are strategically valuable to appointing authorities
6. Improves the data collection process for the gender and racial diversity report.
7. Requires an online system for the public to submit their resumes and where they can search for opportunities for current vacancies.

Ultimately, realizing robust diversity on State Boards and Commissions will take more than legislation. It will require some operational changes that prioritize the recruitment of diverse appointees. Suggestions include:

1. Recognizing that robust diverse recruitment efforts take time. Staff responsible for appointments need to invest time and effort into building new relationships.
2. The caucuses and OTG are encouraged to publicly articulate their commitment to achieving gender and racially diverse appointments and the timeline by which it will be achieved. This will also help illuminate which authorities are doing a good job and those that are not.
3. Among the general public and the volunteers giving input to this report, the most frequently cited barrier is that people lack the knowledge of what opportunities are available and how to get appointed. To that end, the group suggested targeted advertising and organizing outreach events.

There were no concerns or recommended changes, so the legislative proposals will be submitted for consideration.

7. Closing Remarks

Women are leaving the workforce because of COVID too because of childcare, etc. How can we improve this given the nature of the work because we want to make sure we stage and manage what we can realistically stage and manage.

Secretary McCaw stated that what we've done with this taskforce is we've shed light on an issue which is creating framework for change. It's important to ask who needs to be a part of that group so that it can be effective. We have the pen here so we can certainly frame it while getting the work far enough along so that it doesn't get dropped, or so that it can be handed off successfully.

Continue to work on issues so that we can stay connected but don't need to carry the weight. We can think about this for the next meeting and you can think about timelines and when the batons get passed.

8. Public Comment

No comment made.

9. Adjourn Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.