

Governor’s Council on Women and Girls

Full Council Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

January 10, 2023 | 3:00 p.m.

Hybrid: In-Person and Zoom Meeting

I. Call to Order/Greetings and Opening Remarks

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

II. Introductions of Members

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz had each member introduce themselves and their updated position so that information could be appropriately updated.

Vice Chair Vanessa Durantes introduced herself and stated that there is a lot to hear from the subcommittees this year that will be discussed later in the meeting.

III. Leadership Subcommittee Updates

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz shares that the Leadership Subcommittee has some updates, and she introduces a presentation from the Chief Performance Officer of the State Department of Education Ajit Gopalakrishnan.

IV. Presentation on Computer Science Dashboard

Ajit Gopalakrishnan shares that the [new computer science dashboard](#) is now visible on the data portal EdSight. The data focuses on high school, looking at both access and participation. There are several different views available, such as a state view or a district view.

Ajit Gopalakrishnan gives the statistics that 13 percent of high school students are participating in computer science courses in high school throughout the state, and 94 percent of students have access to these courses. The drop-down menu can be utilized to disaggregate the data and look at specific demographics of people. The data shows a significant gender gap in enrollment in these computer science courses.

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz shares that this gender gap forms after grades six, because prior to middle school this gap does not seem to exist. 4

Ajit Gopalakrishnan explains how to filter through various districts to compare participation in computer science courses by region and how to compare participation in different types of these courses. This dashboard will be updated on a yearly basis.

Commissioner Russell-Tucker shares the importance of data transparency and thanks Ajit Gopalakrishnan for his presentation.

Anne Cullinan asked if there is a set curriculum for the SDE to follow, to which Ajit Gopalakrishnan answered that there is no set curriculum, just a framework to follow.

Michelle Duprey asked if data is being collected on staff and students with disabilities, to which Ajit Gopalakrishnan answered that this system does collect data on students with disabilities, but not on staff.

VI. Presentation on Connecticut Paid Leave (*see Attachment 1*)

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz introduces Erin Choquette, the Chief Executive Officer of CT Paid Leave Authority to present on CTPL.

Erin Choquette gave an overview of the Connecticut Paid Leave Act, which creates a source of income replacement benefits for eligible employees and does not provide job protected leave. The program is funded by the .5 percent contributions that covered employers contribute, which funds the trust benefits.

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz asked for clarifications about the fact that the CT Paid Leave Act does not provide job-protected leave, bringing up concerns over maternity leave.

Erin Choquette answers that if an individual is covered under FMLA, they do have job protection. FMLA allows eligible employees to take job-protected leave due to family and health reasons. Leave taken under FMLA is unpaid; employers are not required to provide for income replacement during the leave.

Erin Choquette shares information on qualifying reasons to apply for leave or receive benefits. Medical leave, bonding leave, and caregiver leave are the three most frequently used categories of leave. Military caregiver leave, qualifying exigency leave, and family violence act leave are the less frequently utilized types of leave.

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz asked what is the percentage of people that use family violence as a reason for leave. Erin Choquette explains that this is not a very common type of leave, only about 30 of 50,000 who received benefits have utilized this type of leave. She explains that many people do not know that this type of leave exists as an option.

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz states that efforts should be taken to ensure that people are aware of these types of leave so they can be adequately utilized.

Erin Choquette shares some statistics about the number of Connecticut residents who have received benefits. 43,683 employees have utilized at least one of these previously stated types of leave in the past year.

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz asked what the status of money to fund these benefits is. Erin Choquette responded that they do have the necessary funds to continue to fund this.

Erin Choquette explained how employers could request private plans directly from CTPL. About 650 employers have opted to go this route and created private plans.

Erin Choquette shares the three ways to help employees get access to these benefits: learning, sharing, and partnering. She invites everyone to check out CTPL's website, social media, newsletters, and podcast to help get the word out to everyone who is entitled to receive these benefits.

Commissioner Russell-Tucker thanks Erin and Andrea for this presentation and their contributions to this program. She asks if they have been able to disaggregate those who have applied for leave by gender. Erin Choquette answers that women are taking these types

of leave at a rate of 2:1 compared to men. This difference can be mainly attributed to childcare and maternity leave.

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz shares that this leave can now be utilized by both parents which is wonderful for child development.

Erin Choquette shares that the entitlement for FMLA and CTPLA benefits is generally twelve weeks in a twelve-month period.

VII: Subcommittee Report on Economic Opportunity and Workforce Equity

Tara Downes shares that the subcommittee met on December 8th and heard a presentation from MyCTSAavings about a program that helps people set up a Roth IRA and save for retirement. This is an issue that disproportionately impacts women and minorities; therefore, the subcommittee thought it was important to learn about this program and its benefits.

The office also conducted a health equity study on the state health plan. The study found that the health plan exceeds every benchmark, though there is a notable gap in paraprofessionals.

VIII. Subcommittee on Education and STEAM

Tim Larson shares that this subcommittee has been working on an information hub, a coding challenge, and an internship tool kit in the arts. He shared that they are continually looking for more sponsors to promote this activity, as they allow more hands-on opportunities for young people. The subcommittee plans to organize more networking and social type events in the future.

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz shares that she encourages various offices to hire interns because not only do internships provide hands-on experiences to young people, but they also benefit the offices and provide potential future employees.

IX. Reports on Economic Opportunity and Development

Shanté Hanks reports that according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, only 14 percent of construction workers are women. She shares that her department has just recently hired a woman as the new Building Construction Specialist, which is a first for the Department of Housing.

X. Subcommittee on Health and Safety

Commissioner Gifford shared that she is very interested in women's maternal health and that she is excited to be a part of this subcommittee in the upcoming year.

Commissioner Bye shared that the subcommittee has recently talked about racial equity in maternal health, as well as teen pregnancy and mental health. She discusses the details of setting up a universal nurse home visiting program; the contract is currently being finalized.

XI. Subcommittee on Leadership

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz shares that at the most recent meeting there was a presentation on Connecticut Inclusive Investment Initiative from the office for the Treasurer. The Connecticut Horizon Fund is one of the programs that was discussed, which aims to give opportunities to minority, women-owned, or Connecticut-based emerging investment managed firms.

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz shares some of the subcommittee's plans for the upcoming year, which includes holding a panel on teaching middle and high school students computer science, a

focus on women in farming, celebrating Black History Month, holding a panel on domestic violence, celebrating International Women's Day, and holding a program on career advancements in health sciences.

Commissioner Bye emphasizes that women should not be shamed for going into field that are dominated by women. These jobs that are traditionally held by women are very important and necessary for our society to function.

Reminder that the Million Women Mentors stand up for STEM Mentorship Award is looking for nominations currently and the deadline is at the end of the month.

Commissioner Perez shares two announcements from the Department of Banking. First is a request for entities to submit their ideas to improve financial literacy within the department. He encouraged anyone who might be interested to reach out to DAS. Secondly, the Department of Banking is hiring a young woman as an intern in this office.

XII. Announcements and Upcoming Meeting Schedule

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz shares one announcement from CoWaG, that Million Women Mentors will be hosting a chapter networking event on Friday, January 27th from 3:00 – 6:00 at Southern Connecticut State University.

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz states that the subcommittee on Economic Opportunity and Workforce Equity is scheduled to meet on February 7th at 3 p.m., the subcommittee on education and STEAM will meet February 15th at 3 p.m., the subcommittee on health and safety will meet on March 6th at 10 a.m., the subcommittee on leadership will meet on March 22nd at 3 p.m., and the full council will meet on April 11th at 3:00 p.m.

XII. Adjournment

Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz adjourned the meeting at 4:12 p.m.