

Governor’s Council on Women and Girls

Full Council Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, April 11, 2023| 3:00 p.m.

Hybrid: In-Person and Zoom Meeting

Video available here:

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tnEDy3_ceFY

I. Call to Order/Greetings and Opening Remarks

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

Vanessa Dorantes, Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families and Vice Chair of the Governor’s Council on Women and Girls, provides a few opening remarks.

II. Presentation on Annual Social Justice Conference

Destiny Fontan and Janessa Pearson, students from Capital Prep. Magnet School share their social justice projects.

Destiny Fontan shares details about her research process. The social justice project focuses on the lack of health insurance provided for low-income Black and Latino communities. She is using participants from grades nine to college-aged students and asking them what they know about health insurance. She plans on giving lessons to educate students about the importance of health insurance

Janessa Pearson shared details about her social justice project. She is focusing on teacher retention in the Hartford district and the impact of the pandemic on this problem. She sent out surveys to people who have worked in the Hartford district as well as teachers who have left the Hartford district. She wants to determine the root of the problem, whether its compensation issues, approaches to professional development, a lack of respect for the profession, etc.

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz shares a few remarks about the importance of each of these social justice projects and gives each student some suggestions for further research.

III. Presentations: 2023 Agenda from Kid Governor Ellie Mendez and Cabinet Member Scarlet Beaulieu

Ellie Mendez explains how she became Kid Governor and shares details about her platform: *Express and Address Your Feelings*. The goals of her platform are to educate students about the symptoms of anxiety and depression, provide useful coping strategies, and create a digital mental health hub with resources for kids.

She recently hosted a live educational program for students in Connecticut in which she interviewed several psychologists, including Dr. Stephanie Bozak from the Department of Children and Families and Dr. Lorna Volta from Connecticut Children's, and Dr. Noel Casiano from the University of Hartford. She also shares her idea for implementing a "tap-out light system" in classrooms that would allow students who are feeling overwhelmed to take breaks. She has already implemented the system at her own school, Monroe Elementary School, and she hopes to expand to include it in more classrooms across the state.

To provide useful coping strategies, Ellie plans to film a video where she will interview a school psychologist named Catlin Chabot. They will discuss the importance of mental health and how students can communicate their feelings at school. She plans to implement a mailbox system in classrooms in which students can write down their feelings, so they do not have to share them out loud.

Finally, she shares her plans to research mental health resource for kids and create a digital hub that includes these resources. She is currently partnering with the Department of Children and Families and CT Family Day, hosting a poster contest for 5th grade students in the state to provide uplifting messages through artwork.

Scarlet Beaulieu, 5th grader from Andover Elementary School, shares details about her platform, focused on the issue of littering. She plans to help clean up the state by leading community trash clean-up walks and helping to spread awareness of the problem. Scarlet wants to make a public club that provides community outreach and participates in litter clean-up, create a network of education that provides both virtual and in-person materials, and organize a Connecticut Trash Walk Day for schools and communities.

So far, she has organized a trash walk for her school and four other towns, and she has created a presentation on how to set up these types of events. She also wrote to other candidates who ran for Kid Governor and asked them to hold their own trash walks. She is currently organizing an assembly at Andover Elementary School and holding a town-wide clean-up.

Kid Governor Ellie Mendez reflects on her Inauguration Day and taking her Oath of Office. She shares her blog page and explains her goal to show other girls that they can be leaders in the state and in their communities.

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz thanks Ellie Mendez and Scarlet Beaulieu for their contributions and shares that the Kid Governor Program has been running for six years, and five of the six have been girls. She suggests that Scarlet works with the Connecticut Conference of Municipalities and the council on small towns to reach out to the environmental committees of various towns and organize trash walks.

Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes shares that she has partnered with Katie Dykes at the Department of Energy and Environmental Protection on a Conservation Corps. She invites Scarlet to their wilderness school over the summer to help clean up some of the trails around Connecticut.

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz thanks both students for their presentations and contributions to the Kid Governor Program.

IV. Presentation: Students for Personal Finance Education

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz introduces Sarina Kulsakdinun, a student from Greenwich Academy, founded an organization called Students for Personal Finance Education. Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz explains that there is a bill currently in the legislature to mandate half a credit in personal finance (Senate Bill 1165).

Sarina Kulsakdinun and Ying-Chu Chen give a presentation about their organization. Sarina shares that while her experience taking a personal finance class was very valuable, she was upset by how few girls were in the class. This led her to conduct interviews in her own community to gain an idea of how much her fellow classmates know about personal finance and what they would like to learn. She shares that 74% of teens feel like they don't have a good grasp of personal finance concepts and 73% of teens want more financial education. Connecticut had received a grade of a D for its financial literacy legislation because there is currently no law mandating students take any high school courses in this area.

The students conducted a meta-analysis and shared their results. The main takeaway is that financial education programs have positive causal treatment effects on financial knowledge and behaviors. There is evidence that financial education programs increase credit scores, reduces non-student debt, reduces default rates, and decreases delinquency rates. The effects have shown to be the most significant for low-income and first-generation students.

Ying-Chu Chen explains what their organization has done so far and what their plans are, presenting a roadmap. They explain how they have gotten state representatives Harry Aurora to sponsor a bill that would require all Connecticut high school students to take a personal finance course. The students provide suggestions of ways schools can provide financial literacy education other than through coursework, such as by holding assemblies and hosting events such as a personal finance education week.

The students conclude their presentation by providing some resources for individuals to educate themselves on personal finance topics and encouraging council members to join the cause of advocating for a personal finance curriculum. They open the floor for questions.

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz thanks the students for their presentation and shares her thoughts on why this issue is important. Commissioner Vanessa Dorantes shares her thoughts on how increased financial literacy would benefit individuals and the state and thanks the students for working hard on this initiative.

V. Presentation: Increasing the Voices of Girls in STEM

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz introduces a presentation from Armored Artemises, which is a gender minority robotics team made up of middle and high school students in Glastonbury.

Harlow Ton-That, Captain and Co-Founder of the Armored Artemises, shares some details about the FIRST Robotics organization in which students collaborate to build code, design a robot, and then compete in various challenges against other teams and schools. The organization helps students develop engineering, business, and teamwork skills.

Harlow explains how there is a gender gap in participation in robotics. On middle school teams, the ratio tends to stand around 60% boys and 40% girls, and these ratios tend to decrease in high school to a ratio of about 25% girls and 75% boys.

Boys tend to outnumber girls on robotics teams, so this group was founded as an attempt to create an environment where girls can collaborate and thrive. The team was originally founded as an all-girls team, but it has recently expanded to include transgender and non-binary students as well. The team is now considered a gender-minority team.

The team has been going strong for four years, and they have won the state championship for three of those years. The team has also received a grant from the local Education Foundation that covered most of their funding for over a year. The team also aims to prioritize community relationships. They have partnered with an all-boys team from Xavier High School in Middletown, and this has helped the team build a sense of community.

Bella Weidmann takes over the presentation. Bella explains experience on the team, sharing some favorite aspects of involvement. The team has taught others about STEM and engineering through small interactive activities, such as letting students drive robots. The team also attends events and STEM fairs to try to recruit more members. The team has made connections with Girl Scout and Boy Scout troops in the Glastonbury area.

The team will be partnering with the University of Connecticut to hold an off-season robotics event for the New England area.

Ashley Nakacharoensith takes over the presentation, explaining how their skills students learn through their involvement in robotics often helps them to succeed in school. Ashley has applied these robotics skills to mechanical engineering class.

Anya Mishra takes over the presentation, explaining how the skills students learn in robotics are also applicable to their everyday lives. Anya states that students learn valuable teamwork skills, such as how to distribute tasks among group members and the importance of communication. The students use discord to send out messages and collaborate about events. They are often asked questions by judges, and the students can practice their public speaking and critical thinking skills when answering them.

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz thanks the students for their presentation and shares her thoughts on how the gender gap in STEM fields begins in high school. She says that she loves that the students are getting exposure to STEM and learning skills to be successful in their future careers.

Vanessa Dorantes shares her thoughts on the presentation and states that she appreciates the students' confidence and eagerness to learn STEM skills. She says that she appreciates the inclusion of transgender and non-binary individuals and that it is important to work not to leave anybody out.

VII. Announcements

The council skills over subcommittee meeting reports and goes right into announcements.

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz announces that they are going to begin posting on YouTube to centralize the CoWaG recordings going forward, especially the Women in Leadership panels.

On April 15th from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at the YG Club at the Yard Goats Stadium Hartford Hospital is viewing the documentary *Aftershock*, and this is going to be followed by a conversation on the maternal health crisis. She shares that there is legislation pending that aims to address this crisis and that it is also currently maternal health week.

On Wednesday, May 3rd from 10 a.m. to 11 a.m. via zoom, there will be a panel on Women in Leadership with firefighter talking about their careers. Later on May 3rd from 3:30 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Million Women Mentors will host a stand up for STEM mentorship reception at CCAT.

Members should reach out to Christine Jean-Louis with questions about any of these events.

The Economic Opportunity and Workforce Equity subcommittee will meet May 16th at 3:00 p.m., the Education and STEAM subcommittee will meet May 24th at 3:00 p.m., the Health and Safety subcommittee will meet on June 12th at 10 a.m., and the Women in Leadership subcommittee will meet on June 21st at 3:00 p.m. The next full council meeting is scheduled for

July 11th at 3:00 p.m.

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz thanks Commissioner Dorantes, the council members, and the presenters.

VIII. Adjournment

Lieutenant Governor Susan Bysiewicz adjourned the meeting at 4:01 p.m.