

INTERAGENCY COUNCIL FOR ENDING THE ACHIEVEMENT GAP  
Hartford

Minutes of Meeting  
June 18, 2024 1:00 p.m.  
[Meeting Recording](#)

**I. Opening Remarks and Roll Call**

The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor, State of Connecticut, called the meeting to order at 1 p.m. and welcomed all attendees to the June 18, 2024, meeting of the Interagency Council for Ending the Achievement Gap. She introduced Kari Sullivan Custer to conduct Roll Call.

Roll Call:

Kari Sullivan Custer recorded the following agency personnel present:

Office of the Lieutenant Governor: The Honorable Susan Bysiewicz, Lieutenant Governor, and Tracy Opoku, General Counsel

Connecticut State Colleges and Universities (CSCU):

Department of Administrative Services (DAS): Mark Raymond, Deputy Commissioner

Department of Children and Families (DCF): Michael Williams, Deputy Commissioner; Matt Folan, Superintendent of Schools, Unified School District #2; and Vincent Russo, Legislative Program Director; and Mike Carone

Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD): Tekowa Omara-Otunnu, Manager for Arts Education

Department of Housing (DOH): Shante Hanks, Senior Advisor

Department of Public Health (DPH): Julie Vigil, Branch Chief

Department of Social Services (DSS): Astread O. Ferron-Poole, Director of Administration; Talitha Coggins, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Director

Connecticut Judicial Branch (JUD):

Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE): John Frassinelli, Division Director; Laura Stefon, Chief of Staff and Legislative Liaison; and Kari Sullivan Custer, Education Consultant

Office of Early Childhood (OEC): Maggie Adair, Communications and Legislative Program Manager

Office of Policy and Management (OPM): Peter Hopko, Budget Specialist

Lieutenant Governor reviewed the meeting agenda and objectives set forth. She shared that the focus of today's meeting will be an agency roundtable discussion on legislation in the 2024 session.

She shared that we welcome the active engagement of our Council members, and we will continue to follow the format of our previous meetings where we will address policy recommendations from the 2014 Master Plan and seek input from Council members. She invited participants to ask questions or share anything that you would like to add.

**II. Acceptance of Minutes and Follow-up from Last Meeting Discussion**

Lt. Governor shared that the Council last met on March 19, 2024. The minutes of that meeting were circulated to the Council in draft form for your review.

Participants were invited to make suggested changes at this time. Seeing and hearing none, Lt. Governor asked for any objections to the minutes as final. Seeing and hearing no objections, the [March 19, 2024, minutes](#) were accepted as final.

### **III. Legislative Roundtable and Discussion**

Susan Bysiewicz opens discussion with the focus on legislation in the 2024 session that relates to the Council's work.

Council members provide updates on bills and topics of interest:

#### **Department of Administrative Services (DAS)**

- Mark Raymond provided information on new funding:
- \$1 million for facilities for the Opportunity Centers with DSS
- \$122 million for indoor air quality grants for schools
- Mark Raymond will follow up on tracking details related to specific inquiries, including the funding and effectiveness of air purification boxes in schools (UCONN and Middletown Public Schools.)

#### **Department of Children and Families (DCF)**

- Mike Carone provided legislative updates:
- Senate Bill 327 (Special Act 24-9) establishes a task force to study the effects of hate speech and bullying on children.
- House Bill 5436 involves changes to mandated reporting, including a preliminary inquiry step to improve efficiency.
- Senate Bill 127 (Public Act 24-79) increases the age for background checks for foster care applicants and expands adoption subsidies.

#### **Office of Early Childhood (OEC)**

- Maggie Adair highlighted key legislative updates, including:
- Senate Bill 14, establishing the Early Start Connecticut program to simplify early childhood funding streams and stabilize workforce requirements.
- Expansion of incubator models for family childcare providers, starting in New Britain.
- House Bill 5002 (Public Act 24-91) creates an Early Childhood Education Fund, focusing on long-term investments.
- Tri-Share Program in New London County will split childcare costs among employers, employees, and the state.
- Care 4 Kids Program received an \$18.8 million boost, allowing over 2,000 families to be removed from the waitlist.

#### **Department of Housing (DOH)**

- Shante Hanks answered questions on the Head Start on Housing partnership, noting that 93 families and 203 children have been housed.
- The state has built or renovated 12,000 housing units since 2019, with 5,000 units currently under construction.

### **Office of Policy and Management (OPM)**

- Peter Hopko highlighted budget allocations for FY25, including:
- \$150 million for education finance reform to enhance funding for public schools, charter schools, and magnet schools.
- \$1.8 million for the Tri-Share program in Eastern Connecticut.
- \$15.5 million for increased pre-K slot rates and \$18.8 million for Care 4 Kids.
- \$10 million for children’s behavioral health
- \$7 million for urgent crisis centers
- \$800,000 for school-based health centers
- \$7 million for Medicaid rate increase for children’s behavioral health services

### **Department of Public Health (DPH)**

- Julie Vigil discussed key legislative actions:
- House Bill 5003 (Public Act 24-82) coordinates WIC program offerings with DSS and the Department of Agriculture.
- Senate Bill 217 (Special Act 24-10) establishes a task force to create a universal patient intake form for behavioral health services for children.
- House Bill 5262 (Public Act 24-118) adds a question on sexual abuse to the Connecticut School Survey.

### **State Department of Education (SDE)**

- Laura Stefon discussed several important bills:
- Senate Bill 14 merges early childhood education and education priorities into one cohesive bill.
- House Bill 5436 simplifies the teacher certification process and establishes an Educator Preparation and Certification Board.
- A new discipline bill (House Bill 5437) limits in-school suspensions from 10 to 5 days and refines guidelines for out-of-school suspensions for PK-2.

This presentation and discussion can be [watched online](#).

## **IV. Next Steps**

- Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz provided an overview of the next steps going forward.
- The next meetings will take place on September 17, 2024, and December 17, 2024.
- Lt. Governor Bysiewicz invited suggestions for future agenda items and guest speakers.
- Thea Montanez, the newly appointed Senior Advisor to the Governor, will provide updates at the September meeting on the newly formed Kids Cabinet.

## **V. Closing/Meeting adjourned**

Lieutenant Governor Bysiewicz expressed her and the Governor’s appreciation of all the work put forth in this legislative session. We appreciate your time and talent and dedication, and we will see you next time. Thank you so much for your participation in our Interagency Council meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.