

**Governor’s Council on Women and Girls  
Economic Opportunity & Workforce Equity Subcommittee**

**MEETING MINUTES**

**Tuesday, September 13, 2022 | 3:00 PM**

Microsoft TEAMS Virtual Meeting

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**I. Call to Order**

Assistant State Comptroller Tara Downes called the meeting to order at 3:00 PM.

**II. Housing & Community Development Leadership Institute (HCDLI) Update**

Dep. Commissioner Hanks, DOH, reported that the Housing & Community Development Leadership Institute (HCDLI) curriculum allows participants to have the opportunity to meet individuals in that field. They also learn about common tools and funding resources with municipalities and other organizations to use and promote economic development, including infrastructure development and small business support.

Internships were offered both in the summer and fall. Locations for the summer internship included the Town of Windsor, New Haven, Greater Hartford, Glastonbury, and Fairfield. Currently, there are discussions on including additional housing authorities in order to have a diverse mix of locations.

Applications are currently being accepted for the next cohort. Interested individuals can go to [hcdli.org](http://hcdli.org) for more information. There is no cost associated with participating and the internships are paid once the entire curriculum is completed.

Christine Jean-Louis asked Hanks if there are any follow-ups being done with the cohorts. Hanks responded that feedback is being provided through in-person meetings and lunches.

Christine Jean-Louis also asked if there are measurements or a way of tracking the progress/success of the program. Hanks answered that this is what HCDLI is currently addressing/working on. With two cohorts that have fully completed the program, feedback and data can be gathered which will assist with improving the program, as well as funding.

**III. Office of Workforce Strategies—Status on Legislative Report to Assist Women Returning to Workforce**

Director Anthony Barrett, who administers the diversity, equity, inclusion, and accessibility work for the Office of Workforce Strategy presented on women’s return to work. Women have been disproportionately affected by COVID-19 due to occupational vulnerabilities and childcare needs. Women lost 1.7 million more jobs than men and the rate of unemployment was greater by over 4.1%. Factors that impact this are childcare

and vulnerable jobs. When examining the demographics of who is affected, women without postsecondary education and women with disabilities were particularly impacted.

Landscape barriers were also examined. Childcare remains a large issue, as well as healthcare. A February 2022 survey (Pew) found that the top three reasons for workers quitting include: low pay, no opportunities for advancement, and feeling disrespected at work. The data has exhibited that black women, in particular, are being impacted especially those with intersectional identities (for example, individuals who are both black and part of the LGBTQIA+ community).

Another aspect is industry efforts. Returnship programs have been created at large firms, particularly focusing on the professionals who have taken a career hiatus and using either project or role-based cohort designs. Consulting and headhunting programs have emerged, focusing on connecting women back to the workplace.

Government efforts have been made. For example, Utah has instituted a return-to-work program focusing on two core tracks: finding opportunities in the Utah state government and enrolling in short-term training at Utah colleges and universities.

Lastly, to bring it all together there will be a collaboration with key stakeholders to design and implement inclusive return to work programs. This begins with identifying and aligning stakeholders within CoWaG and at key agencies. Then, a landscape analysis will be performed of existing resources and programs. After this analysis is completed, a plan to augment existing programs will be designed, taking into account geographic and industry-specific needs. The next step is to implement and assist programs in their return to work efforts with a special focus on marginalized groups of women. Lastly, identifying gaps in programming and pushing for additional legislative items to address these gaps will be done to establish a robust plan for returning to work, but also economic development around women.

Senator Marilyn Moore asked if the data presented is based on national trends. Barrett responded that this is an early onset look at identifying some of the systemic issues. This will be followed by a deeper dive into what the specific issues within Connecticut. The current understanding is that transportation is a key issue.

Billy Huang, who works with the Office of Workforce Strategy added that a lot of studies that have been done are currently at the national scale. The idea is that Connecticut will be able to take lessons from that scale as well as developing and emerging programs from other states to be able to understand what an ideal program would look like. There have not been a lot of studies done specifically on Connecticut, so the idea is that, from national data, Connecticut will be co-crafting and pulling out relevant indicators and factors to design a plan for Connecticut.

Christine Jean-Louis asked Barrett when they are looking for feedback since one of the goals is to connect with different agency partners. Barrett responded that they will be looking for feedback very soon and individuals are always welcome to reach out.

#### **IV. Pandemic Pay Status Update**

Assistant State Comptroller Tara Downes reported on the status of the COVID Relief Program in Pandemic Pay that the Office of the State Comptroller is running. The Premium Pay Program and COVID-19 Relief Fund are separate but can be considered “companions”. The COVID-19 Relief Fund provides financial relief for essential workers who got COVID-19, were unable to work, got sick, or passed away (*See Attachment*). The Premium Pay Program, which launched in August, provides payments to essential workers that were on the job during the pandemic (details about the program and these programs’ benefits can be viewed by clicking on the attachment).

Lori Fernand asked Downes if percentage of women out of the 180,000+ applicants is known. Downes answered no—but in the future, there will be a demographics breakdown and that information will be shared with the group once it is received.

Christine Jean-Louis asked if there is any push in making people aware of the deadline to not only apply, but to complete the application. Downes responds that the push was done even before the programs launched and after having some trouble the first week of the Premium Pay Program, they are taking additional steps to get in front of a lot of groups. There are still about 5,000 new applications every day and the Office of the State Comptroller is assisting get through the application.

Senator Marilyn Moore added that going back and trying to get more money to fill the needs of applications should be a priority, as the individuals who are applying should be able to get the money that they are promised. Downes agreed.

#### **V. Call for Legislative Concepts**

Christine Jean-Louis shared that committees are meeting to identify themes and the specificity of their legislation are being teased out over the next two to three months.

#### **VI. Announcements**

YWCA Hartford Region is offering a free, hybrid intensive training program that prepares individuals for the web design industry. It’s a 10-week program that covers CSS, JavaScript, HTML. The YWCA Hartford Region also has access to Coursera if individuals are interested in learning other languages. People interested can contact Donna Sodipo: [donnas@ywcahartford.org](mailto:donnas@ywcahartford.org).

Assistant State Comptroller Tara Downes asked how long this program has been available. Donna Sodipo responded that the program just started. Downes also inquired where graduates have gone onto. Sodipo responded that the program was replicated from Madison, WI and is funded by Google. There are currently seven individuals in the program doing well—one individual has a college education; however, preference is given to those with limited higher education. The program meets three days a week. Sodipo stated that the subcommittee will be updated on the findings.

#### **VII. Adjournment**

The meeting was adjourned at 3:41 PM.