

Governor's Council on Women and Girls - Full Council Meeting
MEETING MINUTES

In-Person: LOB, 300 Capitol Ave, Room 1E, Hartford, CT

Tuesday July 28th, 2026 at 3:00pm

I. Welcome & Opening Remarks

The Lt. Governor called the meeting to order at 3:00pm, welcomed new members, and extended a warm welcome to all agency commissioners, especially Commissioner Trueworthy and Commissioner Hamilton. She then provided opening remarks and introduced the upcoming presentation on the Partnership to End Human Trafficking (PEHT), presented by PEHT CEO Jamie Manirakiza and Stamford Police Sergeant Stephen Murphy.

II. Presentation: 'Partnership to End Human Trafficking, - Jamie Manirakiza, Stephen Murphy

The Partnership to End Human Trafficking (PEHT) was established in 2016 in response to the need for housing and supportive services for individuals who have experienced sex or labor trafficking in Connecticut. To the speakers' knowledge, PEHT remains the first and only transitional housing program for survivors of human trafficking in Connecticut.

PEHT operates two transitional housing homes, including a four-bedroom home in the Bridgeport area, which opened in 2021, and a seven-bedroom home in the greater Hartford area. Residents can stay free of charge for up to two years and receive comprehensive wraparound services, including counseling, clinical services, support groups, case management, trauma-informed care, behavioral health and substance-use support, and assistance accessing food, medical, and dental services. The Hartford home provides 24-hour staffing and serves individuals with higher levels of care needs. PEHT also provides rapid rehousing rental assistance through a Department of Justice grant and emergency crisis housing through its Safe Stays hotel program.

PEHT reported serving more than 100 individuals in 2025, including 13 individuals through its transitional housing programs. The organization also provides community-based victim advocacy and case management, meeting individuals in safe locations and connecting them with appropriate services and resources.

PEHT discussed its employment and workforce programs, including job training, financial literacy, and low-barrier employment through its social enterprise businesses. The organization employs survivors through its artisan goods business in Fairfield and recently acquired The Pantry, a bakery, market, and café in Fairfield, with the goal of maintaining it as a community

business while creating additional employment opportunities and generating revenue to support survivor services.

In 2024, PEHT launched the Fairfield County Anti-Trafficking Coalition to strengthen coordination among victim-service providers and law enforcement. PEHT and Stamford Police discussed their developing partnership and the importance of a victim-centered approach that allows survivors to access advocates and clinicians before deciding whether to participate in a law enforcement investigation. Stamford Police also discussed proactive investigations and child predator operations, as well as a 2025 operation that resulted in five prostitution-related arrests and individuals accepting services. PEHT and Stamford Police also described their efforts to learn from coordinated anti-trafficking operations in Scottsdale, Arizona.

During discussion, PEHT explained that its two housing locations are undisclosed and that residents, staff, interns, and visitors are required to maintain confidentiality. The organization conducts safety planning and uses a trauma-informed approach that balances safety with individual choice and autonomy.

Commissioner Hamilton asked about coordination with the Department of Children and Families (DCF) regarding children who may be identified as victims of trafficking. Stamford Police reported that it maintains a relationship with DCF and works to ensure that appropriate placement and services are available when children are identified.

PEHT also discussed the challenges of maintaining and expanding its housing programs, noting that both current homes serve individuals age 18 and older and that funding remains a significant barrier to expansion. PEHT may also provide rental assistance to eligible individuals with children through its Department of Justice grant.

The Council also discussed the impact of immigration enforcement concerns on individuals who may be experiencing trafficking. Stamford Police described outreach efforts to labor trafficking victims and emphasized that its investigations are focused on trafficking and victimization rather than immigration status. PEHT reported that concerns about immigration enforcement have affected individuals' willingness to come forward and noted its partnerships with immigration service providers and Catholic Charities for legal services.

PEHT concluded by discussing its continued collaboration with survivors, law enforcement, DCF, community organizations, and other partners, as well as its interest in supporting legislation related to strengthening Connecticut's anti-demand laws. PEHT also participates in the state's Human Trafficking Study Advisory Committee.

III. Report from Council Leadership/Subcommittee Reports

A Council member provided an update on a STEM mentorship initiative that pairs women studying STEM at colleges and universities with mentors in their areas of expertise to provide mentorship and role models.

Health and Safety Subcommittee: The Health and Safety Subcommittee met twice, once in March and once in June. The central theme for 2026 is maternal and infant health.

At the March meeting, the subcommittee heard from the Doula Certification and Training Subcommittee and received feedback from community members and individuals currently practicing as doulas. The subcommittee also heard from the Midwifery Working Group, which was appointed by the legislature, and plans to remain in communication with the group throughout the year.

At the June meeting, the subcommittee heard from the Connecticut Health Foundation regarding its Maternal Health Equity Blueprint. The blueprint provides an evidence-based plan addressing maternal health disparities, including disparities affecting Black women in Connecticut. The subcommittee provided feedback regarding experiences, recommendations, and potential implementation pathways.

The subcommittee has two additional meetings scheduled for the year, on September 14th and December 7th. Upcoming topics include a presentation from the Department of Social Services regarding its maternity health bundle and discussion of the expansion of the universal nurse and community health worker home visiting program, also known as Family Bridge. Through rural health funding, the program will expand into the northeast and northwest corners of the state.

Economic Opportunity and Workforce Equity Subcommittee: The next subcommittee meeting will be held on August 20th at 3:00 pm.

Leadership Subcommittee: The Leadership Subcommittee will host a panel on Women in Forensics on October 14th at Southern Connecticut State University. The panel will include the director of the state forensic laboratory and is intended to engage students studying forensics and criminal justice.

IV. Announcements

a. Upcoming Full Council Meeting Dates:

- i. October 20th, 2026, 3:00 pm at the Legislative Office Building Room 1E

b. Upcoming Subcommittee Meeting Dates:

- i. Economic Opportunity and Workforce Equity Subcommittee: August 20th, 2026, at 3:00 pm
- ii. Health and Safety Subcommittee: September 14th, 2026
- iii. Health and Safety Subcommittee: December 7th, 2026

V. Adjournment

The Lt. Governor ended the meeting at 4:04 pm.