

Governor's Council on Women and Girls

Subcommittee on Leadership

MEETING MINUTES

Wednesday, March 20, 2024 @ 3pm

Microsoft TEAMS Virtual Meeting

I. Call to Order

The Lt. Governor Susan Bysiewicz called the meeting to order at 3pm.

II. Presentation: [Draft Equity Study](#) (CHRO Representative)

Cheryl Sharp, Deputy Executive Director and Commission Attorney at the Commission on Human Rights and Opportunities (CHRO) introduced Darcy Strand to deliver the presentation.

Darcy Strand, Legislative and Administrative Advisor from CHRO, presented the Draft Report on Connecticut State Equity. The State of Connecticut contracted the Faulker Consulting Group (FCG) to complete this study. This study was required from legislation drafted to align state efforts with the Biden administration's executive order to advance racial equity and support underserved communities. The primary goal of the study was to "provide... a comprehensive report evaluating key state programs and policies...to identify any patterns of discrimination, inequality, or disparities in outcomes for underserved communities, and to make recommendations to remedy identified disparities".

The study consisted of two separate focus groups: community-based organizations focus groups and resident focus groups. There were 10 community-based organizations focus groups with 62 representatives and 4 resident focus groups with 18 Connecticut residents, with 2 being conducted in Spanish, as well as a public survey. FCG conducted a landscape review of all the current state equity initiatives based on publicly available data, interviews with contacts at state agencies, and agency-provided data. They concluded there is a widespread interest and deep commitment to equity initiatives on behalf of state agencies, while acknowledging there is more that could be done.

Findings and Recommendations:

- *Leadership and Workforce*
 - The study found that few agencies had structure or support for the individuals responsible for DEI for the agency or considered equity when establishing agency priorities. They identified opportunities to increase representation of people of color in both leadership and certain positions in the state workforce, as well as recommending creating a shared vision of "equity" and ensuring all state agencies have a similar definition. The study also recommended agencies to develop and maintain "equity action plans" and to grow a state workforce and capacity to

advance equity by identifying an “equity team” and eliminating unnecessary requirements that might pose barriers to underserved communities.

- *Training*
 - All agencies are engaging in equity related training, but it is not sufficient to address all aspects of equity. The study recommended building on efforts to expand training, as well as including opportunities to provide training to state agencies employees, community partners, and other entities that work with the state government.
- *Data*
 - The study found that race, ethnicity and language (REL) data collection requirements were not standardized across data agencies, and when it was collected, it was not used in agency program planning and public availability/usability of that data is mixed. As a result, it was recommended that the state should implement standards for data collection across agencies, and demographic data should be published in a transparent and easy-to-use database.
- *Communication*
 - Communication or coordination of equity initiatives often does not occur, and community members face customer service challenges and difficulty knowing who to contact. Agencies must establish consistent expectations for interagency and public communications and develop centralized translation services for all languages and needs, including for those who are deaf/hard of hearing.
- *Community Engagement*
 - It is necessary to strengthen engagement to reach underserved communities, as well as providing funding for designated agency staff who are responsible for community engagement at each agency. The State also must improve agency grant processes to provide greater access to funding for underserved populations, such as considering a single grants management system software tool for all state agencies where grant opportunities would be posted.

III. Presentation: [Dismantling Structural Racism within CT State Government Report](#), Dec. 2023 (Muna Abbas, Associate Commission Analyst, Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health, CT General Assembly)

Pareesa Charmchi Goodwin, Executive Director, and Muna Abbas, Associate Commission Analyst of the Commission on Racial Equity in Public Health (CREPH) presented the report “Dismantling Structural Racism Within Connecticut State Government”. CREPH was established, following the classification of racism as a public health crisis due to racial and ethnic inequities in health and social drivers of health. Pursuant to C.G.S. § 19a-133c, CREPH is tasked with reporting best practices that state agencies can implement to reduce racial inequities and dismantle structural racism within state government.

The Commission has consulted with state agencies, studied nationwide resources and strategies, and spoken with thought leaders to explore what is being done within Connecticut and around the country. The agencies and institutions in the report were chosen following a landscape analysis of innovative ideas that can be implemented across Connecticut state government agencies. The recommendations were informed by current or proposed efforts in the federal government, the state of Oregon, the National Center for State Courts (NCSC), and within Connecticut's own state agencies.

Recommendations:

1. Establish leadership buy-in to set the tone for state agencies to advance racial equity work.
2. Build infrastructure to support racial equity work in government.
3. Require state agencies to develop equity plans to identify racial inequities which exist internally, and to outline steps to address them.
4. Commit to increasing equity in the workforce throughout the hiring, retention, and promotion processes.
5. Implement regular training and mentoring opportunities for employees on diversity, equity, and inclusion.
6. Conduct assessments and examine policies and practices with a racial equity lens.
7. Engage with members of underrepresented communities and use their contributions to inform how state agencies can make services and operations more equitable.
8. Ensure language and communications are culturally and linguistically appropriate to serve the needs of all communities.
9. Ensure that Connecticut's commitment to racial equity extends to the state's contracting and procurement practices.

IV. Announcements

- a. Upcoming Full Council Meeting
 - i. April 9th, 2024 3:00pm Virtually
- b. Upcoming Subcommittee Meeting
 - i. Leadership Meeting: June 26th, 2024 3:00pm, on TEAMS

V. Adjournment

The Lt. Governor adjourned meeting.