

Governor's Council on Women and Girls Full Council Meeting

MEETING MINUTES

Tuesday, January 28, 2025 3:00 PM

Legislative Office Building 1E + Virtual

Video Available Here via CT-N: <https://ct-n.com/ctnplayer.asp?odID=24186>

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Vice Chair Jody Hill-Lilly, who highlighted recent achievements in pay equity and accessibility to education. Despite progress, women remain underrepresented in various sectors.

II. Report from Council Leadership

The 2024 Annual Report is in progress and will be disseminated to all members once finalized. It will also be available on the council's website.

III. Presentation: Hannah Weissman, Code.org

Topic: Proposal to Fund Computer Science Education in Connecticut

- Code.org is a national nonprofit offering K-12 coding curriculum, professional learning, and advocacy for computer science education.
- Key Points:
 - Computer science is a foundational skill, impacting problem-solving, academic performance, and college attendance.
 - Connecticut has over 5,000 open computing jobs per month, with an average salary of \$112,526.

- Only 8.5% of CT students enroll in computer science courses despite 84% of high schools offering them.
- Enrollment disparities exist; young men are 2.3x more likely than young women to take CS courses; Black students are 1.3x less likely than their White and Asian peers.
- Unlike neighboring states (NY, RI, MS, NJ), Connecticut has not allocated state-level funding for computer science education.

● **Legislative Ask:** Support Bill No. 852, "AN ACT CONCERNING FUNDING FOR COMPUTER SCIENCE TEACHER PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT."

Q&A:

- **Middle School CS Education:** Data collection is limited, but early exposure is crucial.
- **Urgency in Policy Implementation:** The longer action is delayed, the more years are lost in implementation.
- **International Comparison:** Countries like Thailand, South Korea, Brazil, and China require CS education for graduation, and many allocate significant funding.
- **CT's Existing CS Dashboard:** Tracks CS availability and participation in grades 9-12, providing a strong foundation for expansion.
- **Lieutenant Governor's Computing Challenge:** A state initiative promoting computer science learning through competitions and modules, culminating in a May event.

IV. Presentation: State Representative Corey Paris

Topic: The Effects of Student Loan Debt on Women and Girls

- Women, particularly minorities, carry disproportionate student debt burdens, limiting financial independence.
- Minority borrowers pay off debt at slower rates; white men repay 90% of their loans within a decade, while minority borrowers pay off only 10%.

- **Connecticut Student Loan Statistics:**

- 500,000 borrowers, with an average debt of \$35,000–\$45,000.
- Connecticut has the 5th highest student debt burden in the U.S., totaling \$18.7 billion.

- **State-Level Solution: Student Loan Reimbursement Program (SLRP)**

- Eligibility: CT residents who attended college/trade school in CT, lived in-state for 5 years, and worked in CT for 2 years.
- Program Benefits: Borrowers making a \$5,000 payment can receive a \$5,000 reimbursement (up to \$20,000 over 4 years).
- Goal: Redirect savings toward homeownership, childcare, and economic growth.

Q&A:

- **How to Apply:** The Office of Higher Education administers the program. Applications are available online.
- **Biden Administration’s Loan Forgiveness Impact:** While 35 million people received relief, only 14,000 CT residents have benefited thus far.

V. Subcommittee Reports

No subcommittee reports were offered at this meeting.

VI. Announcements

- **2025 Council Meeting Dates:**

- April 8 at 3:00pm
- July 1 at 3:00pm
- October 14 at 3:00pm

- **Subcommittee Meeting Dates:**

- Economic Opportunity & Workforce Equity: February 4, 3:00 PM

- Leadership: March 13, 4:00 PM
- Health & Safety: March 10, 10:00 AM
- Education & Steam: February 18, 3:00 PM
- **Website Updates:** Meeting dates, agendas, and minutes will be posted as soon as possible.
- **Upcoming Events:**
 - February 4: Press conference in the Hall of Flags at 10:00 AM on International Zero Tolerance Day for Female Genital Mutilation.
- **Leadership Changes:**
 - Jennifer Barahona introduced herself as the new Deputy Secretary of State, replacing Jacqueline Kozin.
 - Elicia Spearman, Esq. announced as the new CEO of Girl Scouts of Connecticut. Girl Scout cookie season has begun.

VII. Adjournment

With no further announcements, the Chair adjourned the meeting.