

Health Equity Task Force established by Chapter 93 of the Acts of 2020

Meeting Minutes for Thursday, September 3, 2020, 11:30AM – 1:04PM.

Members in Attendance: Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, the Office of Senator Julian Cyr office (represented by Elizabeth Ganz, Legislative Director), Representative Carlos González, Representative Donald H. Wong, Representative Chynah Tyler, Dr. Assaad Sayah (Co-Chair), Michael Curry (Co-Chair), Dr. Frank Robinson, Dr. Milagros Abreu, Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, Jeffrey Sanchez, Hira Shah, Beverly Stables, Dr. Kiame Mahaniah

Members Not in Attendance: Representative Jose Tosado, Dr. Cassandra Pierre

Guest Speakers in Attendance: Carlene Pavlos (Executive Director), Maddie Ribble (Director of Public Policy), and Jenezka Roman (Public Policy Analyst) of the Massachusetts Public Health Association.

The Co-Chairs opened the meeting and welcomed Health Equity Task Force members and the public and reviewed the open meeting law requirements for remote virtual meetings. A roll call was conducted to confirm attendance and that participants could hear the proceedings.

Approval of the minutes for the August 24th Health Equity Task Force meeting was conducted by roll call vote.

The Co-Chairs reviewed the meeting agenda and the charge of the task force under chapter 93 of the Acts of 2020, including its specification that the Task Force report interim and final findings and recommendations in a minimum of seven areas set forward in the statute.

The Co-Chairs also outlined for Member input the preliminary planned Task Force timeline for interim and final reports. The timeline proposed, which is subject to updates, is as follows:

- September 3: Virtual Task Force second meeting
- September 16: Virtual Task Force Public Hearing
- September 18: Virtual Task Force fourth meeting
- Additional September date TBD: Virtual Task Force fifth meeting
- October 2020: Interim Report
- Bi-weekly Virtual Task Force meetings in October - December 2020 (with at least two additional public hearings to complete the final report)
- December 2020 final report.

Guest presenters from the Massachusetts Public Health Association were introduced. Carlene Pavlos, Executive Director of the Massachusetts Public Health Association, presented *“Health Inequities in COVID-19: State Policy Considerations.”* The presentation is attached as part of the minutes.

Questions and answers followed the presentation.

There was discussion among Task Force members of occupational health data, allocation of public health resources, data collection, municipal public health infrastructure and cross-jurisdictional services

sharing, opportunities for collaboration with public-private partnerships toward a shared public health agenda including the ongoing COVID-19 response, empowerment of communities of color and small businesses, and equity in future COVID-19 vaccinations given historical inequities.

Task Force members are cognizant of the challenging state budget environment. There was discussion about the FY 2021 state budget uncertainty and the balance in terms of revenues. The Task Force acknowledged that there are broad, multiple stakeholders with various perspectives in this area.

Recognizing the critical point in time for equity in the continued and ongoing COVID-19 response, discussion ensued about a focus for the Task Force on responsive and practical policy recommendations and solutions, starting with ways to most effectively make a difference in arenas hard hit by the pandemic and to build on prior and ongoing health equity to advance overall progress further.

Co-Chairs and Task Force members emphasized a goal of incorporating all the significant work by many leaders and entities on health equity, inclusive of prior work and recommendations, current and ongoing work, as well input received through this process.

Co-Chairs addressed the goal to garner input in multiple ways through the Task Force members, public hearings, public meetings, and written information.

Co-Chairs closed the meeting with a reminder to submit contact information (including any staff contacts) and asked members to disperse widely the public notice for the upcoming September 16th public hearing to encourage widespread, inclusive participation of the community and stakeholders both in oral and written testimony.