

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

Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, October 28, 2020, 10:30 AM – 12:00 PM.

Members in Attendance: Dr. Milagros Abreu, Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, Senator Julian Cyr, Michael Curry, Dr. Kiame Mahaniah, Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, Dr. Cassandra Pierre, Dr. Frank Robinson, Jeffrey Sanchez, Dr. Assaad Sayah, Hiram Shah, Beverly Stables, Representative Donald H. Wong

Members Not in Attendance: Representative Carlos González, Representative Jose Tosado, Representative Chynah Tyler

Co-Chair Dr. Assaad Sayah opened the meeting, welcomed Health Equity Task Force members and the public, and then reviewed the open meeting law requirements for virtual meetings.

Co-Chair Michael Curry conducted a roll call to confirm attendance and that participants could hear the proceedings. Co-Chair Curry also attained the approval of the minutes for the October 14th Health Equity Task Force meeting.

A review of the agenda for the meeting was conducted by Co-Chair Michael Curry. This meeting was used to discuss updates relative to the Health Equity Task Force's Interim Report approved on October 14 and future planning steps.

Co-Chair Assaad Sayah thanked Task Force Members for their contributions to the Interim Report that was officially filed with the State Legislature and opened a discussion on any updates relative to the state budget/policy process this Fall. Legislative members of the Task Force (Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz and Representative Donald Wong) offered reflections based on prior experience on how commission and task force reports can make an impact through stakeholders promoting findings. Task Force members discussed state leadership follow-up as well as steps to share the Interim Report with their stakeholder networks.

The Task Force reviewed information on the October 20, 2020 Health Policy Commission COVID-19 and Equity event, including its keynote presentation by Dr. David Williams. There was interest of the Task Force in outreaching to Dr. Williams. There was also interest expressed by Task Force Members in focusing on COVID-19 vaccinations in a future meeting.

A discussion followed about Task Force Member initiatives (Co-Chair Curry, Senator Cyr, Jeffrey Sanchez) to secure resources to support the Task Force's future work toward a final report.

The Task Force discussed scheduling future public hearings with sufficient lead time and wide-ranging areas of input. Suggestions (Drs. Pierre and Abreu) were to space the two public hearings to encompass the evolving public health emergency and potential future peaks in COVID-19 and to allow stakeholder preparation time.

The Task Force seeks to learn from current and prior initiatives in Massachusetts and nationally on health equity. As part of that information gathering, it was suggested that staff make a formal request for records and reports from prior health disparities councils from the State House clerks and Administration sources.

Tentative plans for a November 11th meeting were cancelled in light of the Veterans Day holiday on that date. The next meeting is scheduled for November 18, 2020 from 10:30AM – Noon, which will feature a presentation from the National Academy for State Health Policy. The meeting was concluded.