

PUBLIC MEETING MINUTES

PANDEMIC RESURGENCE ADVISORY COMMITTEE – EQUITY SUBCOMMITTEE

Tuesday, June 23, 2020 – 4:00 PM

Pursuant to the Governor's State of Emergency,
this meeting was conducted solely by videoconference.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Eugene Young, Chair, President, Metropolitan Urban League of Wilmington
Anas Ben Addi, Director, DE State Housing Authority
James Collins, CIO, Department of Technology and Information
Claire DeMatteis, Commissioner, DE Department of Corrections
Rep. Sherry Dorsey Walker, State Representative
Van Hampton, CEO, True Access Capital
Dr. LeRoi Hicks, CMO, Wilmington Hospital
Sen. Gerald Hocker, State Senator
Sen. Elizabeth Lockman, State Senator
Lolita Lopez, CEO, Westside Family Healthcare
Maria Matos, CEO, Latin America Community Center
Rev. Rita Paige, Pastor, New Beginnings Community AME Church
Rosa Rivera, COO, La Red Health Center
Dr. Josh Thomas, CEO/Executive Director, NAMI Delaware
Freeman Williams, NAACP State Conference Executive Member
Rep. Lyndon Yearick, State Representative

STAFF PRESENT

Shavonne White, Director, Office of Supplier Diversity
Sydney Garlick, Behavioral Health Coordinator, Office of the Lt. Governor

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Eugene Young called the meeting to order at 4:04 PM.

NEW BUSINESS

Chair Remarks

Mr. Young started the meeting by thanking the committee members for their attendance and acknowledging Ms. White and partners from the Boston Consulting Group (BCG) for providing support to the committee. Mr. Young then gave an overview of the meeting agenda and reminded that public comment will be taken after the discussion.

Committee Purpose and Timeline

Mr. Young gave an overview of the purpose and goal of the subcommittee and provided an outline for developing the interim report:

1. Describe lessons learned from COVID-19 pandemic response to date
 - Use an equity lens in coordination with the Business & Health Subcommittees
 - Identify best practices both within and beyond Delaware
2. Articulate of goals for the State in the case of resurgence of COVID-19
3. Make recommendations for resurgence strategy

Mr. Young confirmed the timeline for subcommittee and full committee meetings. Subcommittee meetings will take place every Tuesday at 4:00 PM and the next full PRAC meeting is scheduled for June 26th.

Mr. Young detailed some of the issues affecting underserved communities due to COVID-19 and outlined the process of how the committee will move forward to achieve an equity lens in coordination with the Business and Health Subcommittees:

1. Creating focus groups to ensure impacted/targeted communities have leadership and voice in our process
2. Identify which individuals and/or communities will be disproportionately affected (positively or negatively) by recommended solutions and plan for how identified disparities will be mitigated or eliminated
3. Identify solutions and weigh whether recommended solutions perpetuate or help to dismantle historical, legal, or other barriers
4. Collect data and evaluate impact of solutions by race/ethnicity/SES/documentation status

Subcommittee Members Introductions

All members who were present during this time introduced themselves and provided thoughts and remarks on the how they would like to contribute to the work of the committee.

Discuss Emerging Findings on Delaware Equity Analysis to Date

Ms. White provided an overview of the initial findings for Delaware which included data detailing: total hospitalization rates and COVID related hospitalizations; infection rates of Black and Latinx communities compared to the White population; the infection and deaths rates for residents in Sussex County compared to Kent & New Castle Counties; disparities in Georgetown and Lewes and how COVID-19 disproportionately impacted the residents; and how disparities that previously existed created additional disparities for underserved communities.

Comments from committee members

Mr. Young opened the floor for committee members to provide comments, share lessons learned to date, give feedback on the emerging findings and share any insight that they may have from working within their communities.

Rep. Lyndon Yearick advised that the state could learn from the issues that affected the Hispanic population in Sussex. He advised that these residents have a fear of going to healthcare facilities and the state should have responded faster in providing testing to the community. If a resurgence occurs, the state can address a second wave with effective testing.

Van Hampton provided his perspective on issues that affected minority and small businesses; in particular, the PPP loan program. He advised that the reason it failed them was because they did not already have established relationships with the banks administering the loans. In addition, he stated that he does not believe that the program was designed to the benefit smaller businesses. He also stated that the state's HELP Loan Program was too industry specific which allowed businesses outside those industries to be overlooked.

Mr. Young posed a question to Mr. Hampton about what should be on the committee's radar. Mr. Hampton stated providing more money to businesses and more resources to ensure they receive funds quicker.

Maria Matos recommended that the Governor set aside funds from the CARES Act to assist small businesses now or in a resurgence.

Director Anas Ben Addi stated that the workload for agencies and organizations increased due to COVID-19. He recommended that the State think differently in finding resource partners to help with the capacity.

Dr. LeRoi Hicks provided observations from a healthcare perspective. He stated we will continue to live with COVID-19 and a resurgence is expected. Dr. Hicks advised that the damage is differential by race and that we should not lose focus on the mortality gap. He also expressed that support mechanisms like interpretive and at-home managed care services are needed to better serve the Hispanic population. Lastly, Dr. Hicks noted that rapid spread is the reason COVID-19 has a devastating effect on minority communities; this is due to the disproportionate burden on the essential workforce.

Rosa Rivera advised that a lesson learned was discovering the number of individuals who do not have a primary care doctor which affected follow-up care. Ms. Rivera stated that the State moved too slow in testing essential workers and did not address the barriers that prevented vulnerable communities from being tested. She also noted that infected individuals had to continue working due to lack of resources and fear of losing their jobs.

Rep. Sherry Dorsey Walker wants the Governor to set aside funds for black and brown communities and businesses. She stated that vulnerable communities should have access to

testing sites within their community. Rep. Dorsey Walker also noted that a shelter in place plan for homeless individuals who test positive should be considered.

Mr. Young raised a discussion question for the committee: Are there heavily impacted communities where we should place our focus and, are we missing anyone?

Ms. Matos asked if the immigrant population included undocumented individuals. She advised that they were ineligible for government assistance.

Rep. Yearick suggested residents of long-term care facilities.

Rep. Dorsey Walker suggested the Haitian community.

Rev. Rita Paige suggested that we look to houses of worship and public housing developments as testing sites.

OTHER BUSINESS BEFORE THE COMMITTEE

Mr. Young advised that data request emails will be sent to some of the committee members and that outreach will be made to others to discuss setting up focus groups.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Melanie Ross-Levin, Director, Office of Women's Advancement & Advocacy advised that her office conducted research on Delaware Women and COVID and stated she would be happy to share her findings with the group. She highlighted information relating to women in the workforce and women as caregivers.

Daniese McMullen Powell asked the committee to consider the disabled population, particularly those living in nursing homes. Ms. Mullen Powell stated that better testing of staff working in nursing homes is needed as well as adequate PPE. She also mentioned the State should provide better homeschooling resources for children with IEP's and advised that she is against the petition that would allow nursing homes to be exempt from regulations.

NEXT SCHEDULED MEETING

The next meeting of the PRAC Equity Subcommittee will be held on Tuesday, June 30 at 4:00 PM, and conducted by Zoom. Zoom meeting registration will be provided on that meeting's agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Council, Chair Eugene adjourned the meeting at 5:20PM.