



## **Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental and Health Equity Task Force Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, February 10, 2021  
10:00 a.m.  
Virtual Microsoft Teams Meeting**

A regular meeting of the members (the “Members”) of the Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental and Health Equity Task Force (the “Task Force”) was held remotely on Wednesday, February 10, 2021 at 10:00 a.m. Eastern time via a virtual Microsoft Teams meeting.

### **Leadership Present**

Secretary Machel Sanders (Chair)

### **Members Present**

(Unless otherwise noted below, all members joined the videoconference at the opening of the meeting at approximately 10:00 a.m. and all members exited the videoconference by approximately 12:22 p.m. when the meeting was closed.)

Andres Henao	Juvencio Rocha Peralta
Annette Taylor	Lenora Campbell
Anthony Spearman	Lynn Bottone
Ben Money	Margaret Weller-Stargell
Carlos Rish	Michael Regan (Designee: Carolina Fonseca Jimenez)
Catherine Harvey Sevier	Pat Martinez
CC Lamberth	Quinny Sanchez Lopez
Christy Clayton	Sonyia Richardson
Gene Woods (Designee: Fernando Little)	Stephanie McGarrah
Giselle Corbie-Smith	Trey Rabon
Gregory Richardson	Walter Baucom
James Johnson Jr.	Yazmin Garcia-Rico
John Lumpkin (left at 11:57 am)	Yvonne Holley (left at 11:53 am)
Johnathan Augustine	

### **Members Absent**

Adriana Chavela	Donny Lambeth
Cedric Bright	Kevin J. Price
Charlene Green	Rhett Brown
Cornell Wright	Viviana Martinez-Bianchi
Dale Jenkins	

### **Others Present**

Rodney Strong, Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Griffin & Strong, P.C.  
Natalia Botella, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor  
Stephanie Pignes, Director, Office of Public Engagement  
Tammie Hall (Staff Liaison to Economic Opportunity & Business Development Subcommittee)

Guadalupe Jimenez (Staff Liaison to Environmental Justice and Inclusion Subcommittee)  
Sa'Metria Jones (Staff Liaison to Educational Opportunity Subcommittee)  
Catherine Rivera (Staff Liaison to Patient Engagement Subcommittee)  
Emily Roach (Staff Liaison to Access to Healthcare Subcommittee)  
Justin Truesdale (Secretary)

### **Call to Order; Welcome**

Secretary Machel Sanders, Chair of the Task Force, called the meeting to order at approximately 10:00 a.m. Eastern time and welcomed all in attendance. Secretary Sanders took a moment to recognize and reminded everyone that February is Black History Month.

Secretary Sanders noted that the COVID-19 vaccination distributions have been a challenge throughout the country, including North Carolina. However, North Carolina is focused on equitable distribution and providing weekly updates on the rollout of vaccinations.

### **Roll Call; Vote by Roll Call**

Secretary Sanders asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting. John Lumpkin so moved, and the motion was seconded by Dr. Christy Clayton.

Emily Roach, Policy Analyst, NC Department of Administration, asked for a roll call and vote on the meeting minutes and indicated a quorum was present and the meeting minutes have been approved.

### **Disparity Study Overview**

Secretary Sanders introduced Tammie Hall, Director/Assistant to the Secretary for HUB Outreach, to introduce the first speakers. Director Hall noted that this is the first disparity study in North Carolina in over a decade. Director Hall introduced Rodney Strong, Founder, Chairman, and CEO of Griffin & Strong, P.C, and noted that he helped create one of the first diversity compliance programs in the city of Atlanta and is very proactive in his support of minority businesses in marginalized communities.

Mr. Strong provided an overview of the 2021 Disparity Study, noting that the study started in 2019 and covered the period from 2014 to 2018. The study covered the following five industries: construction, architectural and engineering, professional services, other services and goods. With regards to NC State agency contracting, the overall findings of the study showed a statistically significant underutilization of minority and women owned businesses in all five industry categories. In addition, with regards to community colleges and universities, the overall findings of the study also showed a statistically significant underutilization of minority and women owned businesses in all five industry categories, except Asian American owned companies in goods. A regression analysis found that the disparities by race, ethnicity or gender status of the business remained after controlling for capacity and other race and gender-neutral factors.

Mr. Strong noted the following recommendations based on the findings: (i) strengthening the HUB Program, (ii) reviewing and revising Home Rule Requirements to give local jurisdictions more flexibility in applying good faith effort and establishing small business reserve programs, (iii) instituting MWBE subcontracting goals in addition to annual goals based upon availability, (iv) requiring robust good faith efforts so that if firms don't meet the goals they must prove meaningful good faith efforts and just that they checked off 50 points, (v) instituting size standards for HUB certification to benefit smaller MWBE firms, (vi) creating a small business reserve program that allows only small businesses to bid on certain sized contracts, (vii) providing or facilitating supportive services to better assist HUB firms to be better prepared

to bid on state contracts, (viii) implementing mandatory subcontracting goals on large contracts to create more opportunities, (ix) continuing to view Bonding and Insurance requirements to make sure required levels are necessary, (x) utilizing a balanced scorecard to closely monitor utilization and establish measures of accountability for HUB firm growth and (xi) applying remedial programs consistently wherever state dollars are expended.

Mr. Strong noted that there was also a recommendation for data reform. This includes maintaining uniform data, centralizing access to data for community colleges and universities, capturing all award data and tracking all subcontractor data (MWBE and non-MWBE).

Kevin Price asked whether there was any comparative data for similar states, particularly those in the Southeast. Mr. Strong noted that about 10 years ago, he conducted a disparity study for Tennessee, which showed similar results and stated that Virginia is also in the process of conducting a study. Mr. Strong noted that generally, the states around North Carolina have similar outcomes from these studies.

Dr. Corbie-Smith noted that the recommendations should be considered generally across the Task Force and asked how anchor institutions could be involved in this process. Mr. Strong noted that he thinks there is a lot of opportunity for anchor institutions to be involved, and they have recently worked with Charlotte to look at procurement inclusion and increasing its use in anchor institutions. Mr. Strong stated that there are a lot of opportunities in the healthcare and energy sectors.

CC Lamberth asked for confirmation of the period covered by the disparity study. Mr. Strong noted that it covered fiscal 2014 to fiscal 2018.

Ben Money asked how the Task Force could access the department level data for DHHS. Mr. Strong stated that they have robust databases that are available to the Department of Administration, and they could work with him to determine what information they are prepared to release. Secretary Sanders also asked Director Hall to speak to how the Department of Administration monitors data on an ongoing basis. Director Hall noted that the data is publicly available on the Department of Administration's website and is proactive in sharing data. The Department of Administration provides quarterly reports to provide purchasers with current information on how well they are doing so they can make changes when necessary.

Walter Baucom asked if a firm is women and minority-owned what category will the funds fall under. Mr. Strong noted that the funds would fall under the minority category, and Director Hall further noted that in North Carolina the state certifies on race first, such that the women owned category is White female only.

Pat Martinez asked whether the reports would be provided in other languages, including Spanish. Director Hall noted that they would work to have the report in a bilingual format.

The Task Force took a five minute break following the discussion.

### **Presentation from Task Force for Racial Equity and Criminal Justice (TREC)**

Emily Roach introduced Natalia Botella, Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor, here to provide an update on the Task Force for Racial Equity and Criminal Justice.

Ms. Botella noted that similar to the Task Force, the Task Force for Racial Equity and Criminal Justice was formed by an Executive Order issued by Governor Cooper in June of 2020. The Task Force for Racial Equity and Criminal Justice has 4 groups: (i) Law Enforcement Management, (ii) Policing Policy

& Practices, (iii) Court-Based Interventions to End Discriminatory Criminalization and (iv) Advancing Racial Equity in Trials and Post-Conviction.

The Task Force for Racial Equity and Criminal Justice issued 125 recommendations (also available at [www.ncdoj.gov/trec](http://www.ncdoj.gov/trec)) related to several topic areas. With regards to substance use disorders, the task force recommended (i) responding more appropriately to emergency calls for service, (ii) adding crisis intervention training, (iii) treating addiction as a public health crisis, (iv) establishing and expanding access to diversion programs, (v) encouraging summons in lieu of arrests, (vi) hiring more behavioral health professionals in schools and (vii) increasing funding for behavioral health services in prisons. The task force also recommended decriminalizing the possession of up to 1.5 ounces of marijuana and convening a task force of stakeholders to study marijuana legislation.

The Task Force for Racial Equity and Criminal Justice recommended steps that can be taken to improve pretrial release and accountability practices, including eliminating cash bail for Class I, II and III misdemeanors unless there is a risk to public safety, requiring first appearance within 48 hours or next day in which District Court is in session and encouraging the use of independent pretrial services whenever possible at no cost to defendant.

Going forward, the Task Force for Racial Equity and Criminal Justice started quarterly meetings in 2021, with the implementation subcommittees meeting monthly.

Kevin Price asked whether the task force addressed maintaining state-wide data regarding police conduct, complaints and those that have been released. Ms. Botella noted that the task force made a series of recommendations on data given the lack of data identified in their work. In addition, the Executive Order that established the task force also established a State Bureau of Investigation center on the use of force by police officers. Once this work is complete we will have a better sense of use of force data in North Carolina.

Sonyia Richardson asked whether the task force has considered the use of behavioral health care providers of color to meet some of the needs of the population in attempting to ensure racial equity. For example, it has been difficult for minority providers to get contracts to provide behavioral health care services in schools. Dr. Richardson noted that this could be an opportunity to increase behavioral health care services while also increasing engagement with minority owned businesses. Ms. Botella stated that this was not addressed in the report, but thinks that this is something that they will need to do in the implementation stage of this process.

Secretary Sanders followed-up and considered whether the engagement of healthcare providers of color would be part of HUB engagement that the Task Force could help with, particularly with colleges and universities. Secretary Sanders noted that she would follow-up with Director Hall regarding this following the meeting.

Dr. Corbie-Smith asked whether the task force looked at geographic disparities in over policing and whether they had recommendations or looked at medical-legal partnerships to address some of the chronic conditions and mental health issues that are disproportionately experienced by criminal justice involved individuals. Ms. Botella stated that the task force did not analyze medical-legal partnerships, but did make recommendations regarding funding hospital based violence intervention programs. Geographic disparities in over policing was a theme highlighted in the background of the report and shaped a lot of the recommendations.

Ms. Botella noted that the task force looked at the fact that there were similar rates of drug use, but disproportionate rates of arrests among different populations. For instance, about 70% of marijuana arrests

were of African-Americans despite similar usage of marijuana, so that was a driver behind decriminalizing the possession of up to 1.5 ounces of marijuana.

Dr. Margaret Weller-Stargell asked whether there has been discussion or consideration for establishing quick response teams across the state to get to individuals sooner and get them engaged in treatment. The task force did look at Wilmington and Chapel Hill as examples of what was already going on in North Carolina. The recommendations were high level and recommended crisis intervention as a minimum and additional steps that local jurisdictions could take to try to address that issue. Dr. Weller-Stargell asked that going forward the task force consider looking into establishing quick response teams.

Secretary Sanders thanked Ms. Botella for attending the meeting and sharing information about the Task Force for Racial Equity and Criminal Justice.

### **OPE Director Introduction and COVID-19 Vaccine Outreach Updates**

Secretary Sanders introduced Stephanie Pignes, Director, Office of Public Engagement. Ms. Pignes noted that her job is to be a bridge between the Governor's office and constituents. The Office of Public Engagement is working with DHHS and community partners to ensure equitable distribution of the COVID-19 vaccination. They are also working with the Hometown Strong task force established for rural North Carolinians to do outreach to the Latinx communities in more rural areas.

Dr. Carlos Rish noted that he practices in Mecklenburg County and has a 90%+ Latinx patient population. He believes that the outreach to the Latinx community has been deficient. In many instances there has been no outreach to his patients and some providers have vaccines but no patients to give them to. Deputy Secretary Ben Money thanked Dr. Rish for his work and noted that while Dr. Rish is seeing some situations where providers have vaccines but no patients to give them to, in many instances there is not enough vaccination to go around. The DHHS has been focused on vaccine allocation and equity by providing vaccines to historically marginalized communities, which has started to move North Carolina to a more equitable distribution of the vaccine. This effort initially slowed NC down in terms of total distribution early in the process because many vaccines were spread throughout less populated counties to ensure those constituents received vaccines too, but now we have moved up to 6<sup>th</sup> in the nation in vaccine distribution.

Dr. Lenora Campbell asked whether DHHS provides guidelines for how counties should distribute their supply equitably. Dr. Money indicated that DHHS has provided detailed provider guidance and has also let them know how DHHS does the allocation by provider so that providers will have greater predictability.

### **Subcommittee Reports**

The Task Force reconvened for subcommittee reports. Emily Roach noted that each subcommittee is allotted 5 minutes and there will be time for general Q&A after the reports.

#### **Access to Healthcare Subcommittee**

Dr. Corbie-Smith, the chair of the Access to Healthcare subcommittee, noted that since the last meeting, the subcommittee met with Stephanie Pignes, Director, Office of Public Engagement, to strategize ways to involve boards and commissions in COVID-19 awareness and outreach efforts. Asking Task Force members to do three things, as follows: (i) update email signatures to include the 3 W's logo and a link to the DHHS website, (ii) contact at least one community group the Task Force member knows and ask if they can share COVID-19 resources and (iii) share the COVID-19 vaccine training 101 registration

with the Task Member's network to help build capacity among trusted voices in the community. The Access to Healthcare subcommittee will follow up with a fact sheet including these requests and hopes to ask other boards and commissions to do this as well. The objectives for the February meeting is to continue to focus on ways the Task Force can ensure COVID-19 vaccines are distributed equitably in North Carolina. The subcommittee will also continue to consider its recommendations from the 2020 report and work on policy implementation.

Dr. Sevier noted that the subcommittee is also focused on finding creative ways to reach out to our harder to reach populations and if the Task Force members have ideas about that, please pass it along to the subcommittee. Dr. Corbie-Smith also highlighted the role that minority-owned businesses could play in reaching out to the more senior minority population with regards to vaccinations and education, and the importance of targeting those that work in the criminal justice system when considering equitable distribution as that is how COVID-19 was introduced into the prison system.

Dr. Sevier further noted that the subcommittee is in the early stages of some planning with the AARP about outreach to the more senior population through the use of basic technology, for example telephones, for those that are not as computer literate.

Juvencio Rocha Peralta encouraged that community organizers be included as part of the planning process, and not just the outreach and execution of the plan.

Dr. Christy Clayton noted that she had encountered some difficulty with outreach to leadership in Person County and welcomed ideas about how to best conduct outreach so that it is welcomed and accepted.

#### Economic Opportunity and Business Development Subcommittee

Rep. Yvonne Holley, the chair of the Economic Opportunity and Business Development subcommittee, noted that they are reviewing best practices of other states and collecting and analyzing data of current practices within the state. Rep. Holley stated that the subcommittee is focused on implementation of the Tier I and Tier II subcontractor plan by reviewing subcontracting in the construction area and obtaining more information regarding procurement to try to implement things that are working in construction procurement for goods and services procurement. The subcommittee is also focused on providing support for apprenticeships and workforce pipelines that encourage job growth by speaking with other agencies that have workforce development to learn what has worked for them. Rep. Holley noted that the prior to the next meeting, the subcommittee plans to dive into the disparity study to understand additional recommendations and parallels with the subcommittee current and ongoing work and action items.

Rep. Holley asked for an overview of the steps to be taken with respect to each subcommittee's recommendations. Emily Roach noted that the Task Force has been advised to work on all the recommendations to the greatest extent possible, and some of that involves looking for more specificity on some of the recommendations made in the report. Ms. Roach reminded everyone that the Task Force is looking to bring on a policy implementation coordinator that will also help move the policy recommendations forward. Secretary Sanders stated that for actions that may require legislative or policy actions, the Task Force will work closely with the Governor's legislative office and the Department of Administration's legislative liaison to identify advocates and sponsors at the legislature to help move the actions forward.

Rep. Holley also asked if the Task Force for Racial Equity and Criminal Justice has issued its final report, and if so, have they began working on get policy through the legislature. Secretary Sanders noted

she is not sure where they are in the process, but the report given today was based on the end of year report to the Governor.

#### Educational Opportunity Subcommittee

Pat Martinez, the chair of the Educational Opportunity subcommittee, stated that the subcommittee decided to prioritize the digital literacy toolkit recommendations. The subcommittee noted that the particular toolkit that exists right now is not translated into other languages and it was unclear if the workshops talked about how cultural competency would be addressed. The subcommittee also noted that the trainers should be selected with the make-up of the community in mind. Ms. Martinez stated that communication to particular communities should also be tailored as one type of communication doesn't work for all communities.

Sonya Richardson noted that the subcommittee would be reaching out to Deputy Secretary Ben Money as well as Cornell Wright to invite them to the next subcommittee meeting to discuss how they could partner regarding education as it pertains to vaccine distributions.

Juvenio Rocha Peralta asked whether there was any conversation regarding recommendations to establish local advisory councils within the immigrant community. Ms. Martinez didn't recall the subcommittee considering this, but welcomed a discussion regarding local advisory councils.

#### Environmental Justice and Inclusion Subcommittee

Carolina Fonseca Jimenez, staff liaison to the Environmental Justice and Inclusion subcommittee, noted that the subcommittee's focus is on Short Term Goal #1 which is to evaluate the feasibility and designate a fulltime position on Environmental Justice, Equity and Inclusion, specifically in the Department of Commerce, Department of Transportation, Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and at the Office of Emergency Management. Currently the subcommittee is reviewing the draft positions that the sister agencies have sent them. Short Term Goal #2 which is led by Dr. Jim Johnson is to "conduct an inventory of aging infrastructure and buildings (schools, senior centers, hospitals, etc.) that have exposure to radon, asbestos, mildew, mold, etc. and consider remediation projects of impacted facilities for job creation initiatives." Currently, there is a point of contact list to continue to have conversations around these issues with the appropriate people providing input. The subcommittee is also reaching out to the superintendents at the schools in Edgecombe and Robeson county to gauge their interest in working and partnering with the subcommittee to gather data in the school districts and understanding the magnitude of the problems and the costs to address them.

The subcommittee's Long Term Goal #1 is led by Rev. Johnathan Augustine, and is focused on looking at a legislative strategy for additions and/or changes to statutes and rules to incorporate environmental justice criteria into regulatory actions. Currently, the subcommittee is seeking stakeholder input to see what the community wants to see added or changed.

#### Patient Engagement Subcommittee

Fernando Little, a member of the Patient Engagement subcommittee provided an update on behalf of Cornell Wright, the chair of the subcommittee, noting that the subcommittee has been working on the recommendation regarding establishing mandatory, uniformed, cultural methods of collecting demographic information across all health systems. The subcommittee has been discussing a two-fold approach to this. The first approach is to provide resources, education and toolkits to agencies that want to collect demographic information in a culturally competent manner. The second portion of the conversation has been centered on accountability and enforcement. Mr. Little noted that the NC Hospital Association has

already taken this on, so the subcommittee is reaching out to see how they have addressed accountability and enforcement.

Dr. Lenora Campbell indicated that the Sheps Center has commissioned a report on value based healthcare and accountability and enforcement may be a component of that piece. For instance if collecting demographic information was embedded within payment and reimbursement, that could be a way to address accountability and enforcement.

Mr. Little noted an intersection opportunity he was recently involved in where there was a discussion with members of the Task Force, NC A&T and Atrium Health on how to build pipeline strategies between HBCUs and medical schools in North Carolina.

Dr. Sonyia Richardson asked whether behavioral health care providers are included with the medical schools. Mr. Little noted that they are, and need to be, included.

#### Business Engagement Group

Justin Truesdale, Secretary of the Task Force, provided an update on the Business Engagement Group, noting that the group is proceeding with its goal of identifying corporate best practices related to external and internal diversity efforts. The members of the Business Engagement Group have collected information about what each of their companies is doing and is in the process of combining that information with descriptions, benefits and example companies that are currently implementing those practices.

#### Open Discussion

Secretary Sanders stated that the Task Force plans to implement a logic model to the work the Task Force is doing. The Task Force recognizes that there are a number of points of overlap as the subcommittees addresses the issues it has identified and being able to work together to share resources will amplify the impact of the work and support sustainability.

Secretary Sanders asked the Task Force for feedback as to how its members believe a logic model will help to coordinate efforts between the various subcommittees. Pat Martinez agreed that the logic model would be beneficial to the committee and noted that it will help the members identify the gaps in what is being done.

Dr. Sonyia Richardson noted that the monthly meetings help each of the members of the Task Force see what the other groups are doing and connect the dots on how the members can work together.

Quinny Sanchez Lopez asked whether there would be a logic model for the entire Task Force or for each subcommittee. Secretary Sanders noted that she is proposing a logic model for the entire Task Force.

Juvencio Rocha Peralta noted that he also agrees with a logic model and thinks it will help members identify what is missing in their own subcommittees, as well as others.

Dr. Campbell agrees with using a logic model, but noted that the Task Force should also input resources needed and resources available. Dr. Campbell also said that she thinks it might be a good idea to have a logic model for each subcommittee in addition to the whole Task Force.

Dr. Clayton stated that when considering female business owners, the Task Force should not forget female doctors are also business owners, because when they run their practice they are a business owner.



### **Closing Remarks**

Secretary Sanders thanked the Task Force members for all the work they do and the contributions to equity and inclusion, particularly in the current pandemic. Secretary Sanders thanked Emily Roach for facilitating the meeting.

Secretary Sanders asked for a motion to approve the adjournment of the meeting. Pat Martinez so moved, and the motion was seconded by Annette Taylor.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 12:22 p.m. Eastern time.