



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

**Wednesday, November 18, 2020
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, November 18, 2020 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 9:59 a.m. and all members exited the videoconference by approximately 12:27 p.m. when the meeting was closed.)

Annette Taylor
Anthony Spearman
Ben Money
Carlos Rish
Catherine Harvey Seivier
CC Lamberth
Charlene Green (Joined 10:35 a.m.)
Christy Clayton
Cornell Wright
Dale Jenkins
Donny Lambeth
Gene Woods (Designee: Fernando Little)
Giselle Corbie-Smith
Gregory Richardson
James Johnson Jr.
John Lumpkin
Johnathan Augustine

Juvenio Rocha Peralta
Kevin J. Price
Lenora Campbell
Lynn Bottone
Machelle Sanders
Margaret Weller-Stargell
Michael Regan
Pat Martinez
Rhett Brown
Sonyia Richardson
Stephanie McGarrah
Trey Rabon
Viviana Martinez-Bianchi
Walter Baucom
Yazmin Garcia-Rico
Yvonne Holley

Members Absent

Adriana Chavela
Andres Henao
Cedric Bright

Quinny Sanchez Lopez
Walter Baucom

Others Present

Dr. Ryan Emanuel, (Lumbree) Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources, NC State University
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

Secretary Machel Sanders, Chair of the Task Force, called the meeting to order at approximately 9:59 a.m. Eastern time and welcomed all in attendance.

Welcome

Secretary Sanders thanked everyone for joining and noted that since our last meeting Governor Cooper has been re-elected as Governor of North Carolina for another term. Secretary Sanders also noted that COVID-19 cases have increased recently, which makes the Task Force's work even more important.

Secretary Sanders noted that North Carolina has implemented a COVID-19 alert system to pinpoint counties with the highest level of viral spread and offer specific recommendation to bring the rate of spread down. The map will be updated every four weeks.

Secretary Sanders also reminded everyone to remain safe during the holidays, especially given everyone's desire to travel and gather, and requested that everyone be a leader within their own social circles by wearing a mask and encouraging friends and family to be safe.

Secretary Sanders reminded everyone that November is North Carolina American Indian Heritage Month, and the 2020 theme is Our Land, Our Stories, Our Survival. The theme celebrates indigenous culture and history. During the meeting, we will have the opportunity to hear from Gregory Richardson, (Haliwa-Saponi) Executive Director, NC Commission on Indian Affairs, NCDOA and Member of the Task Force, and Dr. Ryan Emanuel, (Lumbee) Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources, NC State University.

Roll Call; Vote by Roll Call

Secretary Sanders asked for a motion to approve the minutes from the previous meeting and to review the biannual report. Cornell Wright so moved, and the motion was seconded by Gregory Richardson.

The Task Force took 10 minutes to review the minutes and biannual report prior to voting.

Secretary Sanders asked for a motion to approve the biannual report, with corrections. Cornell Wright so moved, and the motion was seconded by Donny Lambeth.

Catherine Rivera, Boards and Commissions Coordinator, NC Department of Administration, asked for a roll call and vote on the meeting minutes and the biannual report and indicated a quorum was present and the meeting minutes and the biannual report have been approved.

Subcommittee Reports

Secretary Sanders asked for subcommittee reports and updates.

Access to Healthcare Subcommittee

Dr. Giselle Corbie Smith, the chair of the Access to Healthcare subcommittee, reminded everyone of the subcommittee's four focus areas. For telemedicine the subcommittee recommended reimbursement and pay parity for telephonic health consultations. Next year the subcommittee hopes to advocate for this, but also ensure that the hardware for 2-way telehealth consultations is in more homes. In the Medical Home, Preventive Care and Accountable Care Communities, the North Carolina AHEC launched the Pandemic Health Workforce Study, which assesses the impact of COVID-19 on North Carolina's healthcare workforce. The subcommittee plans to review the findings of this study to determine future recommendations. The subcommittee also recommended the increase of representation of people with lived experiences on State advisory boards to increase transparency and demonstrate the trustworthiness of our State agencies. Dr. Corbie Smith noted that because the subcommittee's goals overlap with other subcommittees, over the next year, the subcommittee plans to streamline efforts with other subcommittees.

Secretary Sanders asked that with respect to telemedicine and broadband access, has the subcommittee obtained input from other interested parties and ongoing State projects. Dr. Corbie Smith noted that they have met with Jeremy Collins to coordinate efforts, and doesn't believe they have reached redundancy yet. Emily Roach noted that one key effort is focused on increasing and continuing funding for broadband access, particularly in rural areas.

Secretary Sanders noted that there are hotspots in areas for children to attend school and asked if those hotspots were available for telemedicine as well. Dr. Corbie Smith stated that access is barrier to healthcare and is a major driver of health, so they are hoping to address this through broadband expansion.

Dr. Catherine Harvey Sevier noted that there is a real opportunity for the telehealth group and the vaccines group to work collaboratively with patient engagement to accomplish the stated goals.

Dr. Rhett Brown noted that with respect to access to telemedicine a key driver is payment parity. Medicare and Medicaid have agreed to payment parity for video visits, but not necessarily pure telemedicine visits. In addition, private insurance companies have not committed to payment parity, which further restricts access to these telemedicine visits because they may not be offered if there is ultimately not going to be payment for them.

Secretary Sanders stated that an action item from this discussion is to work with insurance agencies and insurance companies to get payment parity. Dr. Brown agreed and noted that during the pandemic, everyone went to parity, but some insurance agencies have not guaranteed parity.

Rep. Donny Lambeth noted that he agrees that payment parity is a huge roadblock to access to telehealth and that he would continue to work on legislation to push to get payment parity.

Patient Engagement Subcommittee

Cornell Wright, the chair of the Patient Engagement subcommittee, noted that the subcommittee is open to working with others to push forward information regarding vaccines and educating patients. Focused on ensuring that demographic data is captured properly and connecting technologies to allow sharing of information across different EMRs. The subcommittee is also focused on ensuring the provision of culturally and linguistically appropriate services and programs in health clinics and hospitals across the State. Mr. Wright noted that once the subcommittee also intends to solidify a survey that includes relevant and appropriate questions.

Catherine Rivera noted that one of the Task Force's policies is to strengthen the capacity of FQHC's, so the education, patient engagement and access to healthcare subcommittees could collaborate to help push those goals forward. The subcommittees could also partner to help push to expand Medicaid in North Carolina and increase the pipeline of diverse students in healthcare fields.

Lenora Campbell commented that with regards to the pipeline of diverse students, we need to focus on health professionals and not just the medical schools, to increase diversity in all areas of healthcare. Mr. Wright noted that to increase awareness of these professions we may need to go back as early as middle school to educate students of the opportunities. Mr. Wright also noted that nursing assistants and nurse aids often move up to become registered nurses and succeed along their career paths. So, to the extent we can get more people on those career trajectories, they would have the opportunity to move up into some of the higher earning positions.

Juvenio Rocha Peralta noted that one thing the Task Force needs to integrate is community colleges and community based organizations to get young people motivated to go into the medical field. The Task Force should also look to schools with large minority populations to direct some students to the medical field.

Gregory Richardson noted that there is a state-wide network of workforce development programs that received funding from the U.S. Department of Labor and those organizations provide opportunities to students that want to go into the healthcare field.

Fernando Little noted that there is an opportunity for larger health systems to align on workforce development and career mobility. For example, Atrium Health is offering a self-funded scholarship to people pursuing the RN designation, so they can have meaningful employment while pursuing the RN designation.

Dr. Sonyia Richardson noted that the Task Force should make sure to also include mental health and diversity of students in areas such as social work, counseling and psychology.

Ben Money noted that The Community Health Worker program is designed to create both an entry point into healthcare professions as well as additional opportunities for growth.

Economic Opportunity and Business Development Subcommittee

Rep. Yvonne Holley, the chair of the Economic Opportunity and Business Development subcommittee, highlighted a few of the subcommittee's accomplishments. The subcommittee reviewed the HUB participation for projects under \$250,000 consistent with the Governor's Executive Order 143, and pursuant to that review the subcommittee suggested a HUB solicitation prior to request for a waiver to ensure that there is no HUB vendor that is able to do the requested work. The subcommittee recommended the development of a policy that requires good faith efforts to identify a HUB vendor before gaining approval for construction projects. The subcommittee recommended having a memorandum of understanding with corporations that do business with the State to have them commit to using HUB vendors. In addition, as the State recruits new businesses, it should include an understanding of a social return on capital investment. The subcommittee recommended the implementation of a Tier I and Tier II subcontracting plan that should be tracked and reported monthly. In terms of low hanging fruit, the State could implement a policy for purchasing below \$5,000 that requires effort to locate a HUB firm.

Dale Jenkins noted that the subcommittee also wants to increase awareness of diverse businesses. Also, when grants are given to businesses moving to North Carolina, the State needs to think about the companies' diversity, equity and inclusion efforts.

Secretary Sanders noted that the subcommittee could work with the Department of Commerce to move forward the recommended policies and transform North Carolina so that awareness of the businesses are there and this is not an afterthought.

Juvencio Rocha Peralta asked how the subcommittee plans to integrate business development within the Latino community in the state of North Carolina. Rep. Holley noted that the Latino community is included within the effort to encourage the use of HUB firms generally, however, there needs to be a focus on the Latino community as well to ensure that it flows to that community as well.

Kevin Price commented that this needs to be a cultural shift to include the perspective of the social return on investment. We don't need to recreate the wheel, just make sure that social ROI is a component of existing programs, and there shouldn't just be a stand-alone diversity program. Mr. Price further highlighted that a part of the culture shift is educating economic incentive leaders about diversity questions that should be asked.

Environmental Justice and Inclusion Subcommittee

Secretary Michael Regan, the chair of the Environmental Justice and Inclusion subcommittee, noted that the subcommittee wants to consider remediation projects as a job creation opportunity. The subcommittee wants to focus on the fact that problems in school buildings is a challenge for educating and advancing students to the workforce. The subcommittee intends to focus on the Sick School Building Initiative where sick schools in Edgecombe and Robeson counties are analyzed to see how those schools can be improved. The subcommittee will then work to define the supply chain to fix the schools' problems and identify businesses to participate in the clean-up work that will need to happen.

Their Short Term Goal 1 focuses on senior level positions in State agencies centered on environmental justice and equity in communities. The long-term strategic focus is a legislative strategy with legislation adopted to allow agencies to consider environmental justice and cumulative impact analysis in decision making.

Educational Opportunity Subcommittee

Pat Martinez, the chair of the Educational Opportunity subcommittee, noted that the accomplishments have been to hold the round table discussion to get feedback on healthcare, academia, finance and the impact of the pandemic on economic conditions in communities of color. The subcommittee obtained great information from the subject matter experts, but also the community. The challenge that was encountered and is being addressed for the next roundtable discussion is to incorporate more time for the public to participate and broaden the conversation. Involving the community will help to build trust. The subcommittee made a few recommendations, including to assist, advocate and encourage the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction and other administrative or academic bodies to adopt a digital literacy curriculum and toolkit that is accessible to all students and parents in their native language. The subcommittee also recommended supporting health centers by implementing telehealth and telemedicine initiatives. The subcommittee also recommended to establish a state wide health literacy coordinating council and corresponding regional health literacy councils.

Next steps for the subcommittee are to narrow down the topics, hold another round table and use the information obtained from the roundtables as a foundation for the long-term goals.

Annette Taylor noted that financial literacy is important in healthcare and the Task Force will need to work across subcommittees to achieve the goals.

Business Engagement Group

Justin Truesdale, Secretary of the Task Force, provided an update on the Business Engagement Group, noting that the group has met and discussed its initial topics and refined them to focus in on what the goals to be achieved. With regards to top priority items for 2021, the Business Engagement Group has identified the following as items to accomplish: (i) determining and documenting best practices regarding external and internal diversity and tailoring it such that companies at different stages of their development can use and implement the programs and practices, so that every business feels there is something they can do to address diversity issues and (ii) as mentioned earlier in the meeting, focus on expanding awareness of the programs and practices determined and the benefit of diversity efforts generally.

With regards to ways the Task Force can support the group moving forward, once the recommended programs and practices are identified and documented, the Business Engagement Group may need help in spreading that information to businesses through North Carolina. The group hopes to leverage existing entities and connections to do that, but may need some additional help to spread the information.

Review by Secretary Sanders

Secretary Sanders thanked the subcommittees for their reports and highlighted the importance of continued effort to act on the items we have discussed. She noted that our efforts could help North Carolina recover from the current pandemic and help better situate us to deal with future challenges.

Pat Martinez asked Secretary Sanders what challenges she sees in implementing recommendations and policies put forth by the Task Force. Secretary Sanders said that the subcommittees will need to determine which of the priorities we push forward first and those that we may have to wait on. Secretary Sanders noted that the Task Force would also need to differentiate the recommendations and policies that are broad with long-lasting impacts versus those that may have more limited impact.

Rep. Lambeth noted that some recommendations will be a challenge, for example, Medicaid expansion. Rep. Lambeth noted that he supports and sees the benefit of it for North Carolinians. He stated that the Chamber of Commerce will not support Medicaid expansion because they are concerned about the impact on their organization, so the business community will need to get behind this to support expansion.

The Task Force took a 5 minute break at approximately 11:35 am.

Presentations Regarding Environmental Justice & Inclusion

Secretary Sanders introduced Gregory Richardson, (Haliwa-Saponi) Executive Director, NC Commission on Indian Affairs, NCDOA and Member of the Task Force and Dr. Ryan Emanuel, (Lumbee) Department of Forestry and Environmental Resources, NC State University.

Gregory Richardson noted that NC is home to the largest American Indian population east of the Mississippi River and has 8 statutory tribes recognized in the State of North Carolina. Mr. Richardson highlighted that climate change has impacted the American Indian population, including its communities, farming, food sources, and in many ways, a condition that was already there, soil conditions. Problems with soil conditions have also prevented land owners from building homes on their property, and in some places have led to rock slides and homes being destroyed. Accordingly, climate change needs to be addressed.

Dr. Emanuel provided a presentation on Environmental Justice and NC Tribal Communities. Dr. Emanuel noted that the goal of environmental justice is to recognize and undo decades or centuries of discrimination, overt and subtle. Dr. Emanuel stated that it is critical to note that environmental injustice is not necessarily purposeful, and it sometimes arises because of mundane processes. In 2017, the NAACP concluded that African Americans are 75% more likely than the general population to live in fence-line communities with greater pollution. If this disparity was not a front-burner issue before, COVID-19 has now highlighted it given that the underlying health impacts of life in a fence-line community make the impacts of the pandemic worse. Dr. Emanuel noted that the situation for American Indians is similar, however, American Indians make up a little over 1% of the total North Carolina population, so that community is likely to be overlooked in demographic studies.

Dr. Emanuel noted that American Indians are tied to land for cultural reasons and pollution and environmental damage can not only lead to increased health problems, but could force American Indians out of their cultural land and environments. He stated that tribal identities can't be separated from the ancestral territory and land on which the tribes live today, and if they are forced to relocate it damages the culture.

One example of the disproportionate impact of environmental projects on American Indians is the Atlantic Coast Pipeline, where it was concluded that environmental justice populations would not be disproportionately affected by the project, however, American Indians made up 13.2% of the people impacted and only 1.2% of the State population. Accordingly, American Indians were 7 times more likely to live in the pipeline's impact area than elsewhere in the region.

Dr. Emanuel discussed "color-blind" planning that deliberately excludes demographic data from early route planning, which is what happened in the Atlantic Coast Pipeline. However, this increases the likelihood that marginalized populations will be disproportionately impacted, and essentially reinforces the status quo. Dr. Emanuel recommended early and meaningful engagement with tribes in project planning, noting that a critical part of environmental justice is elevating marginalized voices to be part of the conversation.

Pat Martinez noted that it is critical to note the importance of water, and particularly drinking water. Some contaminants are causing cancer, hypertension and other conditions. Dr. Emanuel noted that North Carolina has a high usage of private well drinking waters, but that wasn't part of his study, which was focused on surface waters not used for drinking. Mr. Richardson reminded everyone of the PCB issue in Warren County that started the environment justice discussion in North Carolina, however, many communities are still concerned about the current and future impact of PCBs.

Closing Remarks

The next Task Force meeting will be December 2, and the Task Force will hear from a member of the Council for Women Advisory Board to talk about the impact of COVID-19 on women of color. The report entitled Exploiting Inequity: A Pandemic's Gendered and Racial Toll on the Women and Families of North Carolina was submitted to the Task Force to provide policy recommendations and next steps related to COVID-19's impact on women.

At the December 2nd meeting, we plan to have this as a working meeting to have break-outs. Also, as a reminder, the report is due to the Governor on December 1, which will be polished for presentation to him prior to delivery. Secretary Sanders noted that the Task Force also needs to prioritize and focus efforts amongst its goals, and wants to identify a responsible person, due dates, resources and action items to ensure follow-through on action items.

Secretary Sanders noted that as the Task Force identifies policies and recommendations, it will also need to identify advocacy experts that could help work through how the Task Force goes about bringing the action items to successful implementation.

Secretary Sanders reminded everyone that the December 16 meeting is cancelled, however, the Task Force will receive the 2021 meeting dates to get on everyone calendars.

Secretary Sanders noted that she hoped that everyone has a great Thanksgiving and reminded everyone to be safe.

Pat Martinez moved to adjourn, and it was seconded.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 12:27 p.m. Eastern time.