

Health Equity Task Force established by Chapter 93 of the Acts of 2020
Meeting Minutes for Tuesday, November 18, 2020, 10:30AM – 12:00PM

Members in Attendance: Dr. Assaad Sayah, Beverly Stables, Dr. Kiame Mahaniah, Michael Curry, Rep. Donald H. Wong, Dr. Frank Robinson, Dr. Myechia Minter-Jordan, Jeffrey Sanchez, Rep. Chynah Tyler, Rep. Carlos González

Members Excused Due to Senate Session: Senator Julian Cyr, Senator Sonia Chang-Diaz, Hirak Shah

Members Not in Attendance: Dr. Milagros Abreu, Dr. Cassandra Pierre, Rep. Jose Tosado

Presenters: Jill Rosenthal, Senior Program Director, National Academy for State Health Policy

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

Co-Chair Michael Curry conducted a roll call to confirm attendance and that participants could hear the proceedings. This was followed by an approval of the minutes for the October 28th Health Equity Task Force meeting. A review of the agenda for the meeting was conducted.

Jill Rosenthal, Senior Program Director, National Association for State Health Policy (NASHP), led a presentation on a snapshot of state-led health equity initiatives. There was a discussion on areas to explore and reflect on further from the NASHP presentation. Among the topics Task Force members explored with Jill Rosenthal included:

- accountable and transparent structures to coordinate state equity initiatives across all state agencies;
- establishing metrics on health outcomes and equity as goalposts to chart ongoing progress on equity;
- investments in public health infrastructure, including the local public health system, as essential to making significant progress;
- equitable distribution of resources and approaches such as “health equity zones” to address community-wide approaches and potentially braid resources across various programs that are traditionally siloed;
- Expanded role of community health workers in health equity work.

The Task Force briefly acknowledged and highlighted support for the Attorney General’s recent report/web event on November 16 on “Building Toward Racial Justice and Equity in Health: A Call to Action” which included Dr. Frank Robinson as a panelist. The report calls for action in five domains: 1) data for identifying and addressing health disparities; 2) equitable distribution of health care resources; 3) telehealth as a tool for expanding equitable access to care; 4) health care workforce diversity; and 5) social determinants of health and root causes of health inequities.

A number of priorities from the Health Equity Task Force’s Interim Report were included or are under active consideration in the FY 2021 state budget process. The State Senate was deliberating its version of the state budget and amendments at the time of the Task Force meeting, and there was a brief overview of pending amendments.

The meeting closed with a discussion of future meetings and next steps.