

# **Virginia Council on Women**

## **Minutes**

**Wednesday, May 20, 2020**

### **Virtual Meeting**

(Meeting held virtually due to COVID19.)

Members Present: *Ashley Reynolds Marshall (Chair); Aisha Johnson (Secretary); Kelly Thomasson, Secretary of the Commonwealth (Ex-Officio Council Member); Amy Bridge; Nicole Carry; Margie Del Castillo; Caryn Foster Durham; Jill Gaitens; Diana Gates; Da'Shaun Joseph; Karishma Merchant; Crystal Neal; Holly Seibold; Michelle Strucke; Dr. Devin Pugh-Thomas; Dr. Katherine Tyson; Michelle Woods; and Ramunda Young*

Staff Present: *Governor Ralph Northam, (D) Virginia; Traci J. DeShazor, Deputy Secretary of the Commonwealth; Dr. Janice Underwood, Chief Diversity Equity and Inclusion Officer; Elizabeth Peay, Assistant Attorney General; Gena Berger, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources and Director of Women's Outreach; Suzanne Holland, Special Assistant for Community Engagement; and Danielle Campbell, Special Assistant for Advisory Board Administration (Staff Liaison)*

Community Members Present: Shauna Hooker, Patricia McGowan, Gloria Blackwell, and Elizabeth Banks.

Comments from Governor Ralph Northam: Governor Ralph Northam joined the virtual meeting to speak to the Council. He first thanked the Council for members' ongoing service. He then spoke about the impacts of COVID-19, which has become both a health and economic crisis. Governor Northam stated prior to COVID-19, the Commonwealth was in a good position economically and now we all must work toward flattening the curve. Virginia was one of the first states to close schools in the spring, issue Stay at Home and Safer at Home Orders, and stop elective surgeries. Certain areas of the state have entered Phase One, while others have not yet. Specific direction has not been given from the Federal Government and Governors are competing for PPE. Governor Northam stated that health experts are comfortable with PPE supply levels, however he continues to request more. The ability to test is a challenge and tests must be conducted in lower socio-economic areas. Governor Northam also stated that it is unknown whether COVID-19 is seasonal. Positive cases are trending in a good direction. Prior to COVID-19 the state budget included investments in education including primary and secondary education, higher education, Historically Black Colleges and Universities, raises for teachers, hiring of additional teachers and counselors, community colleges, and early education, among other investments. The state budget office will reforecast in late July/early August. A request has been made from the Federal Government for an additional revenue stream. Priorities in the budget have remained the same, and a refocus may be needed going forward. Governor Northam concluded his comments by encouraging social distancing and wearing face coverings.

Call to Order: Following Governor Northam's comments, Danielle Campbell turned the meeting over to Chair Ashley Reynolds Marshal. Ms. Reynolds Marshal called the meeting to order at 1:10 p.m.

Agenda and Minutes: The May 20, 2020 agenda was unanimously approved on motion by Amy Bridge, seconded by Nicole Carry. The January 29, 2020 minutes were not available at the time of the May 20, 2020 meeting. The approval of the meeting minutes will occur at a future meeting.

Public Comment: Danielle Campbell advised the Council that no public comments were submitted prior to the meeting. Elizabeth Peay advised that public comment can occur via a public line. No public comment was submitted during the meeting. Under the Freedom of Information Act all meetings of public bodies must occur in public. This allows for public comment. The General Assembly has passed a new law as an alternate for in person meetings. Prior to the pandemic, electronic public meetings were only allowed during emergencies to discuss the emergency. The new law allows for electronic public meetings during a state of emergency. The emergency must make meetings in public impractical or unsafe. Michelle Strucke inquired whether web cameras can be deactivated. Ms. Strucke was informed that web cameras can remain deactivated during the meeting.

Chair's Report: Ms. Marshall gave the Chair's Report. She held the roll call and thanked all attendees for joining. Ms. Marshall stated that the Governor's Office is holding stakeholder calls. She joined stakeholder calls for rural areas and African American stakeholders. Ms. Marshall made the Council aware of the calls and that attendees can provide feedback. The Governor's Office has also formed two work groups focused on health equity and education. Ms. Marshall attends the work groups and invited other Council Members to attend.

Women's Outreach Engagement Update: Suzanne Holland, Special Assistant for Community Engagement, presented the Women's Outreach Engagement Update. Constituent services had open office hours across the Commonwealth to bridge the gap between the government and the public. The office hours have been put on hold during the pandemic. The Governor's Office is identifying opportunities to work together with the public to reach more citizens, including women in the Commonwealth. Plans also call on the expansion of Gena Berger's efforts to connect the Governor's Office with the public.

Legislative Update: Gena Berger, Deputy Secretary of Health and Human Resources and Director of Women's Outreach, presented the Legislative Update. Maternal health expansion efforts were successful in the General Assembly. Postpartum care has been extended from 60 days to one year after birth for Medicaid patients.

A proposal was passed to repeal the provision in Virginia requiring a legal permanent resident of five years to fulfill a 40 quarter (10 year) work requirement to be eligible for Medicaid.

Approval has been given for a study into doula benefits for Medicaid patients. This is not allotted in the budget. New spending items approved by the General Assembly are not allotted.

The Governor will reforecast the budget in the summer, and the General Assembly will hold a special session. Decisions will be made at this time on cuts in new spending.

Four million dollars have been allocated to renew the Long Acting Reversible Contraception (LARC) pilot. This includes all LARC, hormonal and non-hormonal.

SB 733 and HB 980 remove provisions in the Code that are medically unnecessary and serve as barriers to abortion access in Virginia. The Bill repeals the 24 hour waiting period to receive abortion services. It also removes the ultrasound requirement, and allows nurse practitioners to perform first trimester abortions. The changes are effective July 1.

The Coronavirus Relief (CARES) Act allocated \$72 million to Virginia for the Child Care Subsidy Program. Virginia's portions will be used to provide child care centers incentives to remain open. Funding expands testing efforts and contact tracing, as well as other proposals offered with a health equity lens. The funding also expands testing efforts, contact tracing efforts and efforts made to increase the Women Infant and Children (WIC) monthly allotments.

Michelle Strucke inquired about hospital rules to allow one person in a delivery room. Gena Berger stated that feedback has been provided by doulas and midwives. Outreach has also been conducted with hospitals and guidance can be provided to hospitals regarding doulas and midwives, allowing those individuals to be treated as part of the mother's care team.

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Suzanne Holland discussed how her role interacts with Gena Berger's role. Ms. Holland stated that her role supports Ms. Berger's role in outreach. Kelly Thomason updated the Council regarding the housekeeping bill for advisory boards. That bill had passed. In addition, the New Americans Advisory Board is being formed. Council members are encouraged to conduct outreach for new board appointments, and encourage potential future members to apply to the advisory board of their choice.

Board Re-setting: Annual Report/Executive Report Guidelines and Next Steps: Ashley Reynolds-Marshall discussed a potential annual report. Advisory boards are not required to submit an annual report or executive report. A recommendation was made to submit an executive summary the first year and submit annual reports subsequent years. Each report details the work of the advisory boards and their subcommittees. Kelly Thomason recommended Council Members not get overwhelmed taking on a large task that can be difficult to manage in the first year. Aisha Johnson suggested that each subcommittee write their portions to submit to an annual report. A motion made<sup>1</sup>, and it was properly seconded by Amy Bridge passed by unanimous vote to write an executive summary the first year and annual reports in subsequent years.

Administrative Update: Danielle Campbell provided the Administrative Update. Observances are recognized on Facebook to include National Women's History Month in April and National Sexual Assault Awareness Month in May. Danielle Campbell has requested each member's

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<sup>1</sup> The secretary was unable to capture the name of the member whom proposed the motion.

head shot and biography for the web site. She is creating a standard operating procedure (SOP) document. SOP's are being standardized for all advisory boards.

COVID-19 Administration Update and Discussion: Traci DeShazor provided the COVID-19 Administration Update. The Virginia Department of Health (VDH) and Virginia Department of Emergency Management (VDEM) are taking the lead on COVID-19 response efforts. The Health Equity Work Group and Health Equity Leadership Team are addressing COVID-19 issues. Education and outreach continue. Testing sites are listed on [vdh.virginia.gov](http://vdh.virginia.gov). The VDH web site also shows total cases, hospitalizations, deaths, and some demographic information. The work groups have requested additional information regarding demographics. State resources provide texts and online information regarding food distribution sites. Additional support services include health support, education support and childcare support. Governor Northam is working with the Virginia Department of Medicaid Assistance Services to increase access to healthcare for the 1.5 million Medicaid members and thousands of low-income residents. Education support includes guidance and resources for families from the Virginia Department of Education. Guidance is being offered to childcare providers to combat the spread of COVID-19, while ensuring ongoing support for essential personnel. Recent community engagement calls have included the interfaith, Asian-American and Pacific Islander American, African-American, Latino/Hispanic, LGBTQIA+, Rural, and Disabled communities. The Siddall Group has been hired to help engage communities of color. The group is also providing translation services for executive orders. The current activity of the Health Equity Work Group is to help provide a unified command and Virginia Emergency Support Team for COVID-19. The group is also working to educate, empower, and engage communities across the Commonwealth. Resources for COVID-19 information include the following:

Commonwealth of Virginia: [Virginia.gov/coronavirus/](http://Virginia.gov/coronavirus/)

Governor's Office: Office of the Secretary of the Commonwealth; Governor's Office of Constituent Services and Community Engagement; and Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

State Agencies: Virginia Department of Health ([vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/](http://vdh.virginia.gov/coronavirus/)), Virginia Department of Emergency Management ([vamergency.gov/coronavirus/](http://vamergency.gov/coronavirus/)), Virginia Department of Social Services, and Virginia 211

All agencies are requesting feedback regarding gaps in services and looking to the regions to reach citizens. The Virginia Department of Social Services COVID-19 Resources recently launched an app to allow Virginians to better navigate available resources. Information includes food support, child care, health insurance, child support, and bill support/assistance.

Committee Breakout Sessions: The Summit Subcommittee discussed a name change. Aisha Johnson and Ramunda Lark-Young suggested that the Subcommittee continue to hold summits and community engagement events as needed despite a name change. Traci DeShazor stated that the Latino Advisory Board has a Civic Engagement Subcommittee. After much discussion about the charge of the Subcommittee, DeShaun Joseph made a motion to change the Summit

Subcommittee name to the Community Engagement Subcommittee. Ramunda Lark-Young seconded the motion and the motion passed by a unanimous vote.

Michelle Strucke gave the Healthcare Subcommittee report. No events are currently planned due to COVID-19. Ms. Strucke suggested the Community Engagement and Healthcare Subcommittees work together in the future. Council Members discussed potential activities going forward. The African American Advisory Committee created a survey which includes questions regarding maternal health services.

Traci DeShazor provided information about the STEM Subcommittee. The scholarship recipients have been chosen, however no donations have been received. An awards reception will not occur, however students and parents will be notified. A reception with the 2020 winners will be held with the 2021 winners. The core group of the STEM Subcommittee members is tasked with closing the loop on fundraising. DeShaun Joseph offered to coordinate fundraising efforts. A separate Subcommittee meeting will be held.

Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion Update: Dr. Janice Underwood gave the Office of Diversity Equity and Inclusion Update. The office is working with the Health Equity Work Group. Dr. Underwood discussed the One Virginia Campaign. The Campaign is designed to receive feedback on what is needed to change diversity, equity and inclusion efforts, and how change is measured. A statewide strategic plan for diversity, equity, and inclusion is being drafted. Governor Northam codified Dr. Underwood's position, making it a permanent position. This is important as structural inequities have been amplified by the pandemic. The Governor's Administration is working on a plan to address the inequities. Partnerships are sought with various localities across the Commonwealth. To participate in the work group, the leader of a locality must make a request to the Commonwealth. The work group meets every Tuesday at 2 p.m.

The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m. with unanimous approval on a motion made by Ramunda Lark-Young and seconded by Diana Gates.