

Health Equity Advisory Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: July 7, 2026

Present

Commission Members: Andlea Brett, Ana Burke, Joanne Crawford, Kheya Ganguly, Mark Hughes, Monica Hutt, Sarah Launderville, Jeffrey Mbarushimana, Alex McCracken, Song Nguyen, Breanna Sheehan, Diana Wahle, Sandi Yandow

Others: Mary Gannon, Kate Jerman, Hannah, McGuirk, Heather Michaud, Alison Segar, Mr. Smith, Joanna Wert, Winnie Wilkinson, and others

Agenda item	Notes
Welcome and Introductions	The meeting began with round robin introductions.
Approve Minutes of May 5, 2026 and June 2, 2026 Meetings	Kheya Ganguly moved, seconded by Andlea Brett, to approve the Minutes of the May 5, 2026 and June 2, 2026 meetings. The motion passed unanimously.
	Alison Segar reiterated a request made by her at previous meetings to include people with language access needs in the HEAC's mission statement, along with other identified populations. She questioned whether that change was ever going to happen or if she needed to continue raising the same concern at every meeting. Sarah explained that the Commission's current mission is established in state statute and changing the language would not be a Commission decision, but rather would require legislative action. Mark confirmed that the Commission's mission is defined in Title 18, Section 252 and while the statute can be amended, any expansion would need to occur through the legislative process. Mark suggested that the Commission include this issue in its annual report and legislative agenda. Alison offered her assistance in drafting language for the annual report or legislative recommendations. Kheya expressed support for Alison's proposed recommendation and urged the Commission to make amending the statutory language a major recommendation to the legislature. Andlea Brett agreed and expressed support for making the recommendation formal.

HEAC Workplan Review	• The draft HEAC workplan was presented and discussed. The discussion focused on explaining the workplan, identifying areas that need updating, and gathering feedback from committee members on how to make it more useful. • Andlea asked where future recommendations regarding language access needs would fit in the workplan. She pointed out that several important public health issues are not specifically identified in the workplan. She asked if additional emerging health equity priorities could be incorporated in the workplan or if the Commission was limited by statutory language. Mark responded that the workplan was put together a couple years ago and should evolve to reflect new health equity challenges and changing circumstances. He said the community engagement process and the legislative process are the areas that provide mechanisms for addressing language access needs and other emerging issues. • Song suggested an addition to the workplan identifying which subcommittee, commission members, etc. are responsible for each task to help understand who is responsible for moving each objective forward. • Monica asked if the purpose of today's discussion was simply to introduce the workplan or to begin revising it. Sarah explained the immediate goal was to ensure all commissioner members understood the existing workplan – especially because many newer members had never seen it – and then use it as the foundation for future revisions. • Kate Jerman offered the Office of Health Equity's support in advancing the workplan. She suggested that she, Mark and Sarah use a portion of their established meetings to update the workplan. Kate offered her strategic planning skills to structure the work planning process and make it more useful for commission members. She suggested a standing agenda item to regularly review progress on the workplan and re-establishing workgroups or subcommittees to move specific objectives forward between meetings. • Next Steps: Mark, Sarah and Kate will continue reviewing the workplan during their regular meetings. A section will be added to the workplan identifying who is responsible for each activity to improve accountability. The workplan will be brought back to the full Commission in manageable sections (goal by goal) for discussion rather than attempting to revise the entire document at once. The draft
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	workplan is linked above to make it more accessible so commission members can easily review it before future meetings. • Mark suggested that the Executive Committee begin documenting and planning for new and emerging issues affecting health equity and create an additional workplan goal or strategic planning component focused on anticipating and mitigating those emerging challenges.
OHE Update	• Katie Jerman presented a draft Table of Contents for a new orientation packet developed from previous feedback. • Diana Wahle expressed appreciation for the comprehensiveness of the packet and noted it would have answered many questions she had when joining the Commission. She suggested identifying a point person that new members can reach out to if they have questions after reviewing the materials. • Ana Burke suggested creating a mentorship or buddy system where experienced commission members can support incoming members during leadership or representative changes. • Sarah Launderville noted the technical support (particularly SharePoint access) is one of the most valuable parts of the packet because commission members have frequently struggled with account and document access. • Kate requested commission member feedback before the next meeting on the HEAC member position description included with the orientation materials. • Mark made a suggestion to better explain the relationship between several organizations and initiatives that commission members often confuse including The Office of Health Equity, The Office of Health Equity Integration, The Health Equity Advisory Commission, The Office of Racial Equity and The Health in All Policies initiative. Kate agreed, noting the Office of Health Equity does not have its own website yet and work is underway to better organize these resources on the Department of Health's website. Future updates will make the relationship between the various offices and initiatives much clearer.
Rural Health Work Update	• Mark shared the HEAC's revised draft letter to the AHS, VDH and DVHA and explained that the letter had been substantially revised in response to concerns raised during a previous meeting. The original letter requested information and documentation from state agencies within specific timeframes, and those requests were removed because some commission members felt they extended

	beyond the Commission's authority and could put state agency representatives in difficult positions. There were also concerns that the original letter requested information the Commission might not be equipped to analyze. The revised letter retains the Commission's recommendations but removes requests for state agencies to provide additional documentation or reports. Mark explained that the revised letter was intended to better align with the Commission's statutory advisory responsibilities. • Diana Wahle expressed support for the revised letter, saying it is simpler and might land a lot more effectively. She believes the letter looks forward rather than criticizing past actions. • There was discussion about the role of commission members who represent state agencies. Kheya explained that agency representatives must balance participating in Commission discussions with their responsibilities to their agencies. They can share information and bring concerns back to their agency Commissioners, but they cannot always advocate for recommendations directed toward their own agencies because it may place them in inappropriate positions. • Discussion continued as to whether commission members think the revised letter still crosses into advocacy. Kheya said she appreciates the revisions but still sees the letter as directing state agencies toward specific actions. She suggested checking with the Human Rights Commission before making recommendations involving its role; Diana confirmed that she had already suggested this to Sarah and Mark. • Sarah commented that the Commission needs internal consensus on its position and what it supports before sending any external letter. • Mark confirmed that the Vermont Racial Justice Alliance has already reached out to the Human Rights Commission directly. • Mark expressed concern that the Commission needs to establish how it will function moving forward. He said the enabling statute commissions the HEAC to advise and without a mechanism for reaching consensus despite differing roles, the HEAC may struggle to fulfill its statutory purpose.
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	• Kheya suggested that state agency representatives continue participating in discussion and letter drafting and then those with conflicts abstain from signing or endorsing the final letter or, in the alternative, have the Commission Co-Chairs sign the final letter once internal consensus is reached. • Next Steps: share the revised letter with all commission members for review; talk about this again at the next HEAC meeting; consider Diana's suggestion to reach out to Jill Olson regarding future RHTP RFPs.
Public Comment	• None.
Adjourn	• The meeting adjourned at 2:00 p.m.