



Cuyahoga County Citizens' Advisory Council on Equity

Thursday, May 29th, 2025

3:00pm-5:00pm

I. Call to Order

Chair Habeebah Grimes called the meeting to order at 3:20pm

II. Roll Call

A quorum was present.

In attendance (in person): Chair Habeebah Grimes, Mayor Annette Blackwell, Ronnie Cannon, Stephen Caviness, Dr. Heidi Gullet, LeVine Ross, Glen Shumate, Yanela Sims, Sheila Wright

Excused absences: LaRaun Clayton, Reverend Kenneth Chalker, Jenice Contreras, Colleen Cotter, Dr. Charles Modlin

III. Public Comment

There was one public comment submitted via email to equity@cuyahogacounty.us.

Chair Grimes read a letter by Mr. Don Bryant, submitted on April 5th, 2025, into the record.

Clerk Byrd indicated criminal charges were filed against an individual involved in the situation detailed in the letter. She informed the CACE the incident described occurred during a public meeting. If anyone

wants additional information, Julia will distribute a link to the County Council meeting where the incident took place.

Clerk Byrd also indicated the requested investigation does not fall under the CACE's purview.

Chair Grimes thanked Mr. Bryant for submitting public comment and encouraged citizens to share their equity concerns with the CACE anytime.

There were no requests for in-person public comment.

IV. Moment of Silence/Reflection

Cuyahoga County Clerk of Courts Nailah K. Byrd reflected on the potential power of the CACE's leadership during the uncertainty of the world's current events. Acknowledging that change is often difficult, Clerk Byrd reminded the CACE of the fundamental work of this council, equity of opportunity and betterment of our community. She encouraged the members to stay the course and expressed heartfelt gratitude from herself, the County Executive, and Cuyahoga County as a whole.

V. Message from the Chief of Staff

Chief of Staff Erik Janas spoke on behalf of County Executive Ronayne who was unable to attend the meeting. Chief Janas thanked the CACE for allowing him to speak and updated them on the state of the County regarding equity issues county and nation-wide. Chief Janas said the Ronayne administration is navigating the blizzard of changes in federal, state, and local policies and directives. He assured the CACE that feelings of uncertainty are showing up across the nation. Chief Janas emphasized the administration's commitment to upholding their equity standards regardless of what happens in Washington D.C.

Member Sheila Wright asked Chief Janas about the proximity of his conversations with local and national leaders, to which he replied he's primarily communicating with colleagues in Ohio. Chief Janas is also inquiring about DEI office operations throughout the state and requesting advice. Member Wright asked about his knowledge of any lawsuits regarding pushback against federal directives. Chief Janas and Clerk Byrd indicated they were aware of a few lawsuits emerging from surrounding cities.

Sitting next to Chief Janas was Senior Advisor Sabrina Roberts. Ms. Roberts reflected on a moment earlier in the day she shared with five University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Morehead Cane Scholars. She explained they are in Cuyahoga County for a leadership program this summer hosted by PolicyBridge, and former CACE member Randell McShepard. The students are examining the economic mobility of youth in the Cleveland area. The conversation was exciting and robust; Ms. Roberts echoed Clerk Byrd's appreciation of the work and dedication of the CACE. Ms. Roberts left her meeting with the UNC students with overwhelming feelings of hope.

Member Mayor Blackwell made a comment about the focus groups. She explained feelings of fear emerging from her community given the current political climate. Mayor Blackwell doesn't think community members will engage.

VI. Update/Message from the CACE Chair

Chair Habeebah Grimes touched on a word and feeling that was mentioned before: hope. Chair Grimes said the work of leadership means holding the flame of hope. She thanked Ms. Roberts for mentioning her conversations with young people who can restore feelings of hope when it seems as though it's being drained. She underscored the importance of engaging the community in a meaningful way through the community survey, while also recognizing the long-standing disparities that existed well before racism was

declared a public health crisis. Oppression, she noted, is designed to exhaust and pull hope away from the community. Yet, Chair Grimes affirmed the CACE is committed to the collective determination to dismantle a system of dominance and oppression. The CACE can help to rebuild lost hope.

VII. New Business

a. Approval of Minutes

The minutes from the March 20th, 2025, meeting were distributed to the CACE on April 10th, 2025, for their review.

A motion to approve the minutes was made by Member Gullet and seconded by Member Shumate. There was no discussion or opposition and the motion to approve the minutes passed.

b. Presentation from Dawnya Underwood on The Centers' H.O.P.E. Campus

Dawnya Underwood, the Executive Director of The Centers' H.O.P.E. Campus (formerly Cleveland Christian Home) joined the CACE to share details about the new child wellness campus.

The Centers' H.O.P.E. Campus was announced on April 11th, 2025, at a groundbreaking ceremony with The Centers' CEO Erik Morse, County Executive Chris Ronayne, members of County Council, and our state legislators.

The Centers and Cleveland Christian Home, joined together in 2022 to enable The Centers to expand access to the full continuum of behavioral health services for children and adolescents. The Centers' H.O.P.E. Campus was established in attempt to solve the youth residential crisis in our county. For several years, our community has faced a severe shortage of appropriate placements for children in county custody.

Ms. Underwood spoke about the Youth Residential Program, a 24/7 care and support facility for youth in the custody of Cuyahoga County Department of Children and Family Services. The Youth Residential Program provides nursing and psychiatric services in a therapeutic and enriching environment to youth who have experienced severe trauma or abuse and/or who may have significant emotional or behavioral health challenges. The core components of the program include emergency childcare beds, emergency treatment beds, intensive treatment beds, and open residential space.

The expansion will add a 24/7 Child Wellness Welcome Center, providing immediate safety, stabilization, and support for children and families. A Rapid Reunification Team will also be present to address dependency causes of custody.

Member Heidi Gullet asked Ms. Underwood about school presence in the H.O.P.E. Campus. Ms. Underwood explained Cleveland Metropolitan School District is required to provide instruction for children in their zip code. There are currently three classrooms onsite.

While discussing program statistics, Member Eddie Taylor asked what the longest length of stay has been. Ms. Underwood said the longest stay of a child she's worked with was one year.

Member Melaak Rashid asked about the average age of a child entering the program. Ms. Underwood said most youth who enter the program are between 14-16 years old. However, she's recently seen older youth enter the program as well as more youth with complicated situations. Member Rashid also asked about the frequency of sibling group or pairings entering the program. Ms. Underwood doesn't see many siblings enter the program which she believes is due to DCFS prioritizing the placement of siblings in foster care together.

c. Recap of Reentry Awareness Month

Due to time restraints, the presentation on Reentry Awareness Month 2025 was tabled. A copy of the presentation was posted to the CACE's website on June 3rd, 2025.

d. Update on the Community Survey

Member Glen Shumate, Chair of the Communications Subcommittee, provided an update on the Community Survey. He explained the next step in the project is to identify and finalize a list of focus group participants for each subject. There will be four focus groups that will form the questions for the Community Survey. They are Equity in Economic Opportunity in Cuyahoga County, Equity in Health and Healthcare in Cuyahoga County, Equity in Criminal Justice in Cuyahoga County, and Equity in Overall Quality of Life in Cuyahoga County.

Member Sheila Wright and Member Yanela Sims expressed their concern about tapping into their networks during an already overwhelming time. Member Blackwell agreed and questioned what the CACE will explain to focus group participants and what they will receive in return for their participation. Chair Grimes responded to the CACE's concerns and assured all that this would be done in a meaningful and respectful way. Member Shumate noted our contract requirements with Cleveland State University and the timeline.

e. Update on the Virtual Meeting Policy

Due to time restraints, an update on the virtual meeting policy was tabled. The CACE Communications Subcommittee is working with the Law Department to draft an amendment to the CACE Bylaws that will include a virtual meeting policy.

VIII. Update from the Department of Human Resources

An update from Kimberley Coleman, Department of Human Resources Manager, was sent to the CACE via email on June 3rd, 2025.

IX. Update from the Department of Equity and Inclusion

An update from Lenora Lockett, the Director of the Department of Equity and Inclusion, was sent to the CACE via email on June 3rd, 2025.

X. Next Meeting

The next CACE meeting will be on **Thursday, August 28, 2025**. The time will be confirmed soon.

XI. Adjournment

Clerk Byrd took a point of personal privilege to recognize the outstanding career of CACE Chair Habeebah Grimes. Chair Grimes is retiring from her position as CEO of the Positive Education Program (PEP) at the end of June. The CACE presented Chair Grimes with a card and bouquet of flowers to commend her exceptional commitment to youth wellness in our community.

The meeting adjourned at 5:22pm.