

# Multicultural Advisory Committee of the State of Utah's COVID-19 Response

## Meeting Minutes

Friday, March 19, 2021 | 3:00 - 4:00 P.M.  
Google Meet | Online

**Members:** Chair Nubia Peña, Co-Chair Byron Russell, Co-Chair Ze Min Xiao, Aden Batar, Juan Becerra, Heather Borski, Silvia Castro, Rebecca Chavez-Houck, Brittney Cummins, Dulce Díez, Jake Fitisemanu Jr., Emma E. Houston, Dustin Jansen, Dr. Len Novilla

**Absent:** Jess Anderson, Mayra Cedano, Neelam Chand, Mikelle Moore, Asha Parekh, Ming Wang

**Guests:** Ramy Ahmed, Ciriac Alvarez Valle, Dr. Joél Arvizo-Zavala, José Borjón, Jacob Buhler, Emilio Manuel Camu, Mayra Cardozo, Angel Castillo, Maegan Castleton, RyLee Curtis, Valentina De Fex, Susi Feltch-Malohifo'ou, Adam Gardiner, Tina Groves, Ariane D. Hibo Ezeh, Jenny Hor, Rossina Lake, Claudia Loayza, Jill Love, Nate McDonald, Katherine Potter, Jeremy Taylor, Taysha Tiatia, Rocío Torres Mora, Jeannette Villalta, Jennifer Vuich, Megan Waters, Nicholina Womack, Marti Woolford Yehemy Zavala Orozco

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### Welcome – Byron Russell, Co-Chair

Byron Russell welcomed attendees to the meeting.

### COVID-19 Relief Bill: Overview – Adam Gardiner

- Sen. Mitt Romney regarding the latest stimulus package bill for the \$1.9 trillion American Rescue Plan: Originally it was too high leading to a reconciliation, which means only 51 votes are needed to pass a bill. To avoid using this process, 60 total were necessary.
- A discussion between President Biden and the Republican congressional delegation led to a proposed \$600 billion bill for COVID-19 relief. The offer was not rejected, but no follow up to the bill occurred. The Democratic delegation started the reconciliation process and the American Rescue Plan bill went into motion.
- Utah will receive \$2.7 billion through this relief bill for local and state projects.
  - \$1.9 billion in local funding
  - \$1.52 billion in state funding
  - \$136 million in state capital projects
- One of the main concerns Sen. Romney had was education funding because Utah had over a billion dollars in surplus and did not need additional funding. Education will receive more funding in 2024.
  - \$500 million for higher education
  - \$682 million for K-12
  - \$174 million for new transit projects
  - \$526 million for other states needs
  - \$3.8 billion for individual checks to stimulate the local economy
- Last time the state received money there was a tight deadline to spend it. This current bill allows until 2024 to spend it. There will also be lighter restrictions on what the money can be used for. It does not have to be COVID-19 related. The best thing for the committee to do is figure out how the funding should be spent and make a case to Gov. Cox.
- What is in the American Rescue Plan bill:
  - \$410 billion in Economic Impact Payments
  - \$350 billion to State and Local Governments
  - \$289 billion for Unemployment Insurance
  - \$268 billion for Transportation and Infrastructure
  - \$129 billion for K-12 education
  - \$135 billion to expand the Child Tax Credit (the credit will be increasing from \$2,000 to \$3,000 for this upcoming year and a set fund will be given monthly per child)
  - \$86 billion for Unions
  - \$81 billion in Tax Credits for Health Care Workers
  - \$50 billion for Small Businesses
  - \$43 Billion for Veteran Affairs, Agriculture, and Foreign Affairs
- Issue brought up by Nicholina Womack: The issue with the Child Tax Credit is the wording excludes children turning 18.

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- The process should be that it follows the previous tax year. For more details on birthday cutoffs, contact an accountant or the IRS to confirm. Nicholina confirms that the cutoff is too early and this affects teenagers turning 17-18, which is a huge transitional phase and often costs more money for families.
- Adam Gardiner will do more research on this issue, and figure out the language used in the bill.

## **COVID-19 Relief Bill: Education** – Brittney Cummins

- A significant amount of money will be pouring in on top of the funding from the past two waves of previous relief bills. The bill is over a billion dollars for education within the state of Utah. The money will be put into three general buckets in the state:
  - K-12 Education will receive \$615 million with 90 percent of the funding going directly to local education agencies (LEAs). The focus will be to directly help at-risk students. The remaining ten percent will be used state-wide for learning loss, summer enrichment programs, and after-school programs.
  - Non-public schools will receive \$36 million with a focus on students below the poverty line.
  - Higher education will receive \$500 million with the focus on students receiving Pell Grant funds and minority-serving universities.
- \$800 million will be taken federally for students experiencing homelessness to help provide education and resources.
- Ciriac Alvarez Valle asked: Are there plans to support the work of schools to create, or expand community programs like the one in Glendale?
  - It depends on what the schools need, but there are spending limits and it will be a one time payment that has to be spent within 2.5 years.
- Rocío Torres Mora asked about early education application.
  - The main bill does not address early learning, however, some other parts do address preschool and childcare. Specific information will be sent to those who ask.
- Nubia Peña asked if there is an equity component to the bill in the distribution of funds, and how can communities engage with their school districts about what the funding priorities should be.
  - The distribution of the funds assumes impact in different ways across the state. The money should flow in a greater amount to LEAs with students who qualify for Title I status. Communities have the opportunity to speak with their school and local district administrators and board members.

## **Vaccine Clinics: Comunidades Unidas** – Yehemy Zavala Orozco

- Yehemy first mentioned that putting the pressure on marginalized communities who already are expected to do most of the work in communicating what the needs are is exhausting. School districts should take the time and research to figure out the gaps in their programs, and how they can better support their underserved communities.
- Comunidades Unidas (CU) has worked with the state to make sure communities such as the Latinx community have access to vaccines. Currently in Utah, Latinos have the lowest number of vaccinations. They are currently working with partners across the state to help communities of color receive vaccinations.
- Some counties are not prepared to support communities of color. The presence of police officers greatly intimidated community members at a vaccination site a few weeks ago, which the police officer did not understand.
- A spreadsheet was created with best practices for health departments to use to better serve communities of color. There are factors like police trauma that are necessary to consider when working with these communities.
- Increasing and maintaining the number of neighborhood/community clinics are extremely important for communities of colors.
- Susi Feltch-Malohifo'ou commented: Local health departments outside of the Wasatch Front are not prepared. There needs to be a conversation between the state health department, the local health department, and communities of color because these communities are asking for vaccines yet the local and state departments are not structured to help with that. The best policy is truth and transparency.
- Marti Woolford mentions that the advocacy of Community Health Workers brings to light important issues and has already helped in making a difference.
- Heather Borski appreciates the feedback and is currently trying to train local health departments across the state on these issues. The lack of vaccines is a common frustration, and has exasperated inequities. With vaccinations opening up next week, demand is going to outweigh supply for a while. This open eligibility will help with the re-prioritization and focus on target groups like the homeless population.
  - Yehemy plans to forward further information and documents to Jenny Hor to pass along.

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- Aden Batar recommended an increase in mobile vaccination sites as it helps serve the underserved population.

## **Vaccine Clinics: OCA Utah** – Emilio Manuel Camu

- OCA Utah has been running the Asian vaccination clinics with two other organizations: the Utah Asian Chamber of Commerce, and Asian Association of Utah. The partnership has only grown since the start.
- Many in the community mentioned if these specific clinics were not available they would not have gotten their vaccine. Workers who are familiar with the community who also help with interpretation were important factors in making the local community feel welcomed.
- Clinics with police officers made some nervous, and even made others leave during their 15 minute wait time, which is dangerous if they have a bad reaction to the vaccine.
- OCA Utah hosted a vaccination clinic on a Sunday for the working class with less flexible schedules.
- What's needed most is disaggregate data. Currently the ethnicity data is not specific enough to see which communities need the most help or resources. Currently this data is being collected on-site, but the information overall would benefit the state at all clinics.

## **Other Business**

- Congratulations to Ze Min Xiao for being named one of five women making history by the United Way of Salt Lake
- Juan Beccera brought up the Feed Utah Food Drive happening over the weekend all over the state of Utah from food pantries, to the National Guard
- Dr. Len Novilla asked if it is possible for the local health departments to share their experiences and best practices with communities of color to help learn from each other.
  - Heather Borski responded: Utah has a decentralized health care system. The Utah Department of Health is currently moving forward with training systems for local health departments to be more culturally sensitive.
- Nubia Peña brought up one of the questions asked the previous week about rental assistance for families who have an informal contract with the landlord. Renters can get a written statement from both parties and will be able to qualify for rental assistance so long as the family is not related to the landlord.
  - Nate McDonald will send further information based on recent guidelines that just came out about familial renters.

## **Action Items**

- Adam Gardiner will do more research on this issue of 16-18 year olds, and figure out the language used regarding the Child Tax Credits.
- Yehemy Zavala Orozco plans to forward further information about best practices and documents on vaccine clinics to Jenny Hor to pass along.
- Nate McDonald will send further information based on recent guidelines that just came out about familial renters.

## **Next Meeting**

Friday, March 26, 2021 from 3:00–4:00 P.M. through Google Meet.