

Racial Equity Advisory Panel 2022 Report to the Legislature January 15, 2022

INTRODUCTION

This report is provided to the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations in accordance with 3 V.S.A. Sec. 5002(c)(3).

The report of the Executive Director of Racial Equity (EDRE) will provide more detail on these topics, but the following represent the highlights of the work discussed by the Panel at its meetings during 2021:

- Equity Stimulus Funds were dispersed to immigrants in Vermont who did not qualify because of their status for federal stimulus dollars.
- Equity issues identified by the EDRE in COVID-19 information and vaccine availability for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) communities were addressed with the provision of language-appropriate information and outreach.
- A letter was sent by the Panel to the Vermont Secretary of Education requesting that the agency provide funding for the Ethnic & Social Equity Standards Advisory Working Group.
- Funding was approved by the Legislature to hire two new staff members in the Racial Equity Office—a Data and Policy Analyst and an Education and Outreach Coordinator.
- The EDRE was tasked by the Legislature with convening the initial meeting of the Health Equity Advisory Panel.
- The Equity Office hired a consultant to do outreach to BIPOC business owners in Vermont to solicit input on how the state can create a climate that will better support their efforts.

REPORT

I. Charge of the Racial Equity Advisory Panel (Panel) pursuant to 3 V.S.A. Sec. 5002(c):

c) The Panel shall have the following duties and responsibilities:

(1) work with the Executive Director of Racial Equity to implement the reforms identified as necessary in the comprehensive organizational review as required by subsection 5003(a) of this title;

(2) advise the Executive Director to ensure ongoing compliance with the purpose of this chapter, and advise the Governor on strategies for remediating systemic racial disparities in statewide systems of government; and

(3) on or before January 15, 2020, and annually thereafter, report to the House and Senate Committees on Government Operations on:

(A) the extent to which the State is achieving the performance targets and measures as developed pursuant to subsection 5003(c) of this title; and

(B) the nature and quality of the collaboration between the Governor's Cabinet and the Executive Director.

II. Panel Members

- Clarence Davis (Term expires 2023)- Appointed by the Governor
- Andrea Brett, Chair (Reappointed effective 2021-Term expires 2024)- Appointed by the Speaker of the House
- Stephanie Seguino (Term expires 2022)- Appointed by the Committee on Committees
- Karen Richards (Reappointed in 2019- Term expires 2022)-Appointed by the Human Rights Commission
- Judge Nancy Waples (Term expires 2023)- Appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court

III. Panel Work

The Panel held seven meetings during 2021. The following represents progress on the Panel's duties and responsibilities:

1) The extent to which the State is achieving the performance targets and measures as developed pursuant to subsection 5003(c) of this title.

At this time, the Panel is not able to comment on the extent to which the State is meeting its performance targets. It is the Panel's understanding that a process is currently underway that seeks to revise the State's Act 186 population-level outcomes.

Due to the efforts of the EDRE and other stakeholders, equity indicators are now being included as part of the State's strategic planning process and in the statewide strategic plans.

The inclusion of equity indicators is an important step forward as the State continues to work towards creating an equitable and inclusive workforce. While there is currently not much opportunity for the Panel to comment on whether the State is meeting these still developing performance measures, we are confident that through the work of the EDRE, in conjunction with the Legislature and Administration, a robust set of performance indicators will be developed and deployed across State government.

2) The nature and quality of the collaboration between the Governor's Cabinet and the Executive Director:

The EDRE reports that the Cabinet has been very responsive to her efforts to create a more equitable workplace through promotion and analysis of the racial impact of programs and services offered by government and the assignment of Equity Coordinators in each agency/department.

Chair Brett reached out to the Governor's Cabinet through Secretary of Administration, Kristin Clouser, and Secretary of Civil and Military Affairs, Brittney Wilson. They confirmed that the

administration has a close working relationship with the EDRE, Xusana Davis, who is viewed as an important member of the team and participates in weekly meetings with both the Cabinet and Governor.

They verified that the State has implemented an Equity Impact Assessment tool for all policies and programs. Equity Liaisons have been created for every agency and department within State government and have begun implementing other policies and proposed legislative changes that resulted from the work with the Racial Equity Task Force.

In addition, an “equity lens” has been incorporated into everything the State does, though both acknowledged continued room for improvement. Ms. Wilson expressed hope that the two new hires to the Racial Equity office will provide Executive Director Davis with more time to implement the agenda of the office. They expressed that Xusana is “a phenomenal person, hard worker and a pleasure to work with.”

Racial Equity Advisory Panel

Andrea Brett

Date: 1/14/2022

Andrea Brett, Chair