

**STATE OF ARKANSAS**

**ASA HUTCHINSON, GOVERNOR**

Arkansas Women’s Commission

Chair: Alison Williams, Chief of Staff to the Governor

Planning Meeting

February 22, 2022

Attendees: Alison Williams, Apprilla Porch, Maddie Spickard, Gayatri Agnew, Mellie Bridewell, Dr. Charisse Childers, Senator Breanne Davis, Tamika Edwards, J.D., Senator Joyce Elliott, Marie Holder Dr. Cherisse Jones-Branch, Heather Larkin, Dr. Kathy White Loyd, Beverly Morrow, Dr. Verónikha Salazar, Dr. Todd Shields, Kathy Webb, Naija White

MINUTES

* The Chair called the meeting to order at 10 a.m.
* The Chair opened the meeting by welcoming Commission members and noted that these meetings are open to the public, being broadcast on the internet and are being recorded.

1. Introductions

Each member of the Commission introduced themselves to the others.

Commission members were directed to contact sheets to correct any misrepresentations in the spelling of their names, their titles, hometowns, etc.

The Chair noted that the Commission will be keeping its historic name, “The Arkansas Commission on The Status of Women.” In its abbreviated form it will be called “Women’s Commission.”

The Chair explained the Governor’s intent for the creation of this Commission, noting that it is not intended to be an extension of past Commissions. Rather, it provides an opportunity to look at long-standing challenges in new ways.

The Chair referenced the Governor’s Executive Order that created the Commission and how the Governor asks the Commission to go about its work through the lens of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Chair noted that Senator Breanne Davis and Senator Joyce Elliott are the Senate Pro Tempore’s and Senate Minority Leader’s appointments to this Commission.

1. History of Women’s Commissions in Arkansas

The Chair briefly reminded Commissioners of the four other Arkansas Commissions on the Status of Women, which had been created by Governors Faubus, Rockefeller, Bumpers and Pryor.

The Chair noted that 2023 will mark 50 years since the last report was written and will be the 25th Anniversary of the Women’s Foundation of Arkansas, a representative of which (Maddie Spickard) will serve as a formal partner to the Commission, not as a member of it.

The last Women’s Commission report was written in 1973 and is considered the most comprehensive of the various Commissions’ reports. Copies of this report were made available to the Commission members.

The chair highlighted Kathy Webb’s mention during her introduction about the 2012 Interim Study Proposal she sponsored and pointed to the 2013 report commissioned by the Women’s Foundation of Arkansas (WFA) to update the 1973 report. Copies of the WFA update report were made available to the Commission members.

The Chair reminded the Commission of its obligation to submit a report to the Governor and General Assembly of Arkansas no later than December 1, 2022.

1. Commission Subcommittees

The Chair requested the Commission stand up a Research and Writing Subcommittee. This subcommittee’s main functions are: a) write the report for the Governor and General Assembly; b) take the minutes from the meetings; c) track research requests; and d) identify research projects needing further attention.

Other topics raised by Commission members for subcommittee consideration included a) the childcare economy and eldercare, b) STEM and technology jobs, c) employment, entering the workforce and equal pay d) education, e) legal rights, f) women’s representation in leadership across the state, whether in business, non-profits or government/elected office, and g) access to technology and healthcare.

Commission members reminded the group that not all impacts are felt similarly for all women in the state and encouraged the Commission to be sensitive to how access to certain systems and/or processes is experienced differently.

Commission members noted that these differences could be due to race, education, social status, geography (rural vs. urban), geology (flat terrain vs. mountainous) or mixes of these differentiators.

The Chair acknowledged that subcommittees were not yet ready for a vote and committed to working with Commission staff to prepare proposed subcommittees for the next meeting’s vote.

1. Meeting Schedule

Commission members were given a list of proposed meeting dates for their review. The Chair requested that any immediately identifiable conflicts be raised to her attention.

The Chair noted that the next meeting of the Commission would be hosted by Dr. Shields at the University of Arkansas on March 15, 2023, in Fayetteville. Further details are forthcoming.

The Chair asked for a motion to adjourn.

The meeting adjourned at 11:04 a.m.