



## RHODE ISLAND COMMISSION ON WOMEN

### MINUTES

FULL COMMISSION MEETING

MARCH 7, 2016

6:30 PM

STATE HOUSE

2<sup>nd</sup> FLOOR SENATE LOUNGE

**Attendance:** Betty Bernal, Kimberly Brito, Maribeth Calabro, Janet Coit, Lisa D'Agostino, Adriana Dawson, Seema Dixit, Senator Hanna Gallo, Stephanie Gonzalez, Representative Joy Hearn, Dr. Eileen Kwesiga, Linda Mahoney, Randy Martinez, Lisa Middleton, Tejal Tarro, Kathleen Wilson.

**Absent:** Carol Anne Costa, Representative Doreen Costa, Elizabeth Francis, Senator Gayle Goldin, Representative Maureen Messier, Senator Elaine Morgan, Vimala Phongsavanh, Barbara Wong.

#### *Call to Order*

Chair Tejal Tarro called the meeting to order at 6:30 pm.

#### *Chair's Update*

Tejal Tarro advised that a bill has been proposed in the Legislature that will modify the Commission's name as well as change some of the statutory language of RIGL § 42-119. Additionally, there is interest in identifying an Acting Executive Director for the Commission with the hopes of establishing a position in 2017. Tejal introduced the Commission's unpaid interns from Roger Williams University and explained that they are researching other states' pay equity practices. Cristin Langworthy introduced herself as a guest of the Commission at the evening's meeting. Tejal explained that the Commission needs a clear, distinct message and mission and reminded Commissioners to be mindful of this as the subcommittees continue working. Commissioners discussed Women's History Month events and topics of note, and Tejal requested that Commissioners send her event information so they can be circulated to Commissioners.

#### *Governor For A Day*

Tejal briefed the Commission on Governor Raimondo's "Governor for a Day" program in honor of Women's History Month. Tejal explained that an essay contest is open to girls 5th through 8th

grade throughout the state, and asked Commissioners to please circulate information about the program throughout their networks. Additionally, Tejal advised that the Governor's Office will work with the Commission to hold a joint event in April.

#### *Senate Bill 2635*

Senator Gallo and Lisa D'Agostino briefed the Commission on S 2635. Representative Hearn advised that H 7694 is the companion bill in the House, and recommended that the Commission also mirror a position statement for this bill as well. On a motion by Tejal Tarro, seconded by Maribeth Calabro, the Commission unanimously voted to submit two identical position statements, one for the House bill and one for the Senate Bill. On a motion by Senator Gallo, seconded by Maribeth Calabro, the Commission unanimously approved the language of the two position statements in support of the House and Senate bills. Betty recommended a lobby and testimony day in support of the bills. Representative Hearn suggested an op-ed or a letter to the press identifying the work of the Commission and the importance of the passage of these bills, particularly given Women's History Month. Dr. Kwisege advised that it is important to set the stage for the Commission, as this is one of the Commission's first public initiatives.

#### *Pay Equity Day Plan*

Senator Gallo discussed ensuring that the Commission is not going to replicate any other groups' efforts with this plan. Adriana discussed inclusiveness with grassroots and community organizations to ensure the highest level of inclusiveness for all women, and suggested that Commissioners utilize their connections and relationships with Rhode Island boards and commissions. Tejal stated that the biggest concern is execution, as this project involves a great deal of work. Adriana recommended involving the Governor's Office and the Community Ambassador to assist with messaging. Stephanie suggested the Commission explore other organizations' materials to avoid replicating work, as this is a national initiative. Tejal recommended to keep execution in mind, as this is a great deal of work in a short time. Adriana offered to reach out to the United Way. Tejal said the goal is to have all plans in place for the next meeting on April 4<sup>th</sup>. On a motion by Kate Wilson, seconded by Kim Brito, the Commission unanimously approved moving forward with the Pay Equity Day plan as discussed.

#### *Equity Challenge*

Tejal asked the Commission to think about names for this challenge and asked the group to make proposals. LGC&D agreed to help with messaging and presentation. Vision 2020's Renee Aloisio will partner with the Commission to assist. The Commission will be tasked with reviewing the documents and plan and providing feedback. Tejal reminded the Commission that we need to change the conversation about this topic. Adriana asked if the Commission could offer businesses within the private sector the opportunity to demonstrate the benefit of this initiative. Tejal advised that all Commissioners will serve as liaisons to groups in Rhode Island on the Equity Challenge.

#### *New Business*

Director Coit reported on her attendance at the Women in Agriculture conference, and advised the Commissioners that Rhode Island has one of the highest participation rates in the country of women in agriculture.