

Health Equity Advisory Commission Draft Meeting Minutes

Date: October 6, 2026

Present: Austin Beaumont, Abby Becker, Jacquelyn Bendavid, Ana Burke, Joanne Crawford, Kheya Ganguly, Mark Hughes, Monica Hutt, Kate Jerman, Justin Kenney, Sarah Launderville, Jeffrey Mbarushimana, Alex McCracken, Kirsten Murphy, Breanna Sheehan, Diana Wahle

Agenda item	Notes
Welcome and Introductions	The meeting began with greetings and introductions.
Approve Minutes of July 7, 2026 Meeting	Monica Hutt moved, seconded by Kheya Ganguly, to approve the Minutes of the July 7, 2026 meeting. The motion passed unanimously.
Public Comment	- None. - Alex McCracken took this time to provide an update on a federal rule change affecting funding for gender affirming care for minors. The change was finalized on August 13, 2026 and takes effect October 13, 2026. Alex explained that Vermont will fully backfill lost federal funds with state dollars to ensure no interruption in services to members and no interruption in reimbursement to providers. A website link with information about the change and the state's response was shared.
New Appointments	Two applicants for at-large membership were considered – Dr. Jacquelyn Bendavid and Joanne Crawford. Commission members received background information about both candidates in advance of the meeting. Both candidates spoke about their qualifications and motivations. Following that discussion, Dr. Bendavid and Joanne Crawford were unanimously approved for at-large membership.
Update from Reset Process	Mark Hughes reviewed the Commission's reset process, which was initiated because some members felt the Commission had lost clarity and momentum after its original work to help establish the Office of Health Equity. He explained that responsibilities had become unclear, the existing workplan was not being used consistently, and emerging issues were difficult to incorporate. The reset is

	intended to provide a clearer framework for moving forward in a more organized, accountable, and effective way. • The reset framework includes a 100-Day Reset Implementation Plan, a 100-Day Decision Brief, a revised Charter, and an Integrated Workplan that combines the Commission’s previous or “legacy” workplan with the new reset work. Mark explained that no major adoption or vote was expected at today’s meeting, but rather members were being introduced to the documents and would have another month to review materials and provide feedback before decisions are made. • Kate Jerman presented the updated Charter which is intended to establish a shared understanding of the Commission’s purpose, responsibilities, operating procedures, and decision-making processes. Kate explained that the Charter had existed since the HEAC’s early days but had not been revisited recently. The reset process expanded and updated the Charter, in part to improve orientation and onboarding for new members. • Commission members questioned whether “core functions” and “scope and authority” were clearly distinguished and appropriately ordered and whether the word “fair” in the mission was the right choice. Kate encouraged members to add comments, suggestions, and edits to the SharePoint document so they can be considered collectively at a future meeting. • A significant part of the Charter discussion focused on decision making. Members discussed adopting a consensus decision-making approach. Further discussion is planned for the November meeting. • Concerns about community voice and accountability were also raised. Jeffrey Mbarushimana questioned how “amplifying community voices” would translate into actual shared power rather than one-way input, and whether agencies should provide written explanations of actions taken in response to community recommendations. • Additional questions included intersectional and language-based disparities and whether tribal consultation should be explicitly included among the Commission’s core functions. Kate explained that the Charter’s core function language comes from statute, but that does not necessarily have to limit the Commission’s broader work.
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	• Rather than attempting to further revise the Charter during full Commission meetings, Kate proposed having a smaller group work with her to refine the document before the next meeting and agreed to seek volunteers to assist with further revisions. Kheya Ganguly, Jeffrey Mbarushimana and Diana Wahle expressed interest in participating in that work. • Kirsten Murphy presented the proposed Integrated Workplan which is intended to serve as the HEAC's central management and accountability tool. The Integrated Workplan combines the Commission's legacy workplan with responsibilities and priorities identified during the reset process. • Kirsten explained that the workplan organizes HEAC's work into three broad categories: standing responsibilities, priority initiatives, and emergent issues. Each activity is tracked in detail including statutory authority, the issue or disparity being addressed, intended outcomes, deliverables, responsible leads, supporting partners, community participation, milestones, timelines, performance measures, required resources, status, risks/barriers, next actions, alignment with the previous workplan, and references/sources. Two examples of how the workplan would be applied were walked through. • The workplan remains a draft and will be revised based on member feedback.
January 2027 Legislative Report Prep.	• Members discussed preparation of the Commission's upcoming annual report, which is due in January. Kate Jerman clarified that a provision tucked into a legislative bill formally authorized the HEAC to report biennially rather than annually. • Sarah Launderville emphasized the importance of producing a strong, concrete report and asked Commission members to volunteer to help develop and write the content. The report will focus on the Commission's work from this year. • Kate Jerman encouraged members who have not previously participated in writing the report to get involved. She said an established template already exists, which should make the process manageable. She described the report as an important way to maintain HEAC's visibility with the House and Senate Committees to which it reports, while also being a relatively modest commitment of time and effort.

	• Kirsten Murphy, who has served as the lead writer for a fair number of previous reports, said she does not want to lead the drafting this time. She is willing to edit and/or provide feedback. Kirsten believes report writing should be a shared skill across Commission members and wants to create an opportunity for others to participate. • Sarah agreed with Kristen and volunteered to help develop report content. • Other members interested in helping with the annual report were asked to reach out.
Review Action Items	• Sarah Launderville emphasized that Commission members should review the reset materials that have been distributed and add comments directly to the SharePoint documents, particularly the Charter. She stressed that this is intended to be a shared process and encouraged everyone to contribute questions, suggestions and perspectives, even if they are unsure whether an issue has already been discussed. • A key action item is to finalize the Charter. Kate Jerman will poll Commission members seeking volunteers to help work on it. • The Integrated Workplan also needs additional review and refinement. Kirsten Murphy noted that Justin Kenney has suggestions regarding how performance measures are addressed, while she has ideas about better distinguishing between outcomes and deliverables. She encouraged other members to offer suggestions for improving and updating the workplan. • Mark Hughes emphasized that all Commission members should review the reset framework itself because the Commission has not yet reached consensus that it represents the direction everyone wants to take. Although current work is proceeding with the assumption that members generally support the framework, Mark stressed that members should identify any concerns, proposed changes or disagreements before the Commission formally commits to it. The framework is included in the 100-Day Reset Implementation Plan previously distributed to Commission members. • Members expressed appreciation for the substantial work completed by reset committee members.

	• Mark Hughes shared information about upcoming community events and civil rights movement work.
Adjourn	• The meeting adjourned at 1:50 p.m.

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