

COMMISSION ON RACE & ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

Minutes

July 24, 2023

Call to Order and Roll Call

The 2nd meeting of the Commission on Race & Access to Opportunity was held on July 24, 2023, at 1:00 PM in Room 129 of the Capitol Annex. Representative Killian Timoney, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Representative Killian Timoney, Co-Chair; Senator Gerald A. Neal, Senator Whitney Westerfield, Representative George Brown Jr., Representative Samara Heavrin, Representative Nima Kulkarni, and Erwin Roberts.

Guests: Jessica Fletcher, Marketing Analytics Director; Brian Mudrak, Senior Data Scientist, Visualization Lead; Logan Rupard, Senior Research & Legislative Analyst; Monique Rice, Computer Science Initiatives Director, Advance Kentucky; Terry Samuel, President, Kentucky Science & Technology Corporation; Dr. Sheri McGuffin, STEM Coordinator, Advance Kentucky; Maria Smith, CEO; Abby Whelan, Program Director; and Diane Clark, Grant Writer.

LRC Staff: Brandon White and Brett Gillispie.

Approval of Minutes

Representative Heavrin made a motion to approve the minutes from the June 20, 2023, meeting of the Commission on Race and Access to Opportunity. Senator Westerfield seconded the motion. A voice vote was taken, and the minutes were approved.

Kentucky Center for Statistics

Jessica Fletcher, Marketing Analytics Director; Brian Mudrak, Senior Data Scientist, Visualization Lead; Logan Rupard, Senior Research & Legislative Analyst presented a Kentucky demographics update from the Kentucky Center for Statistics (KYSTATS). KYSTATS was created by statute in 2013 and is funded by state and federal grant money in order to compile key data to be made available to Kentucky's policy leaders. It is nonpartisan in nature and does not provide any causality of the data that it provides nor any policy recommendations.

Mr. Rupard discussed the details of Kentucky's population changes from 2010 to 2020, changes in Kentucky's poverty rate, and Kentucky's inmate population. Mr. Mudrak discussed Kentucky's total K-12 enrollment demographics, K-12 discipline demographics, the current high school graduation rate, KEES Award disbursements, the number of dual credit scholarship awards, Work Ready scholarship awards, and postsecondary enrollment and completion rates. Mr. Rupard then provided a workforce overview that included median income by race, labor force participation rate, and the unemployment rate by race.

Senator Westerfield asked the presenters to define a "completer." Mr. Mudrak responded that a completer is an individual who receives a degree at any level.

Representative Kulkarni asked the presenters to define "non-resident alien students." Mr. Mudrak replied that he would check and provide an official definition at a later date. Representative Kulkarni followed up by asking whether the increases in the proportion of minority students attending Kentucky schools were expected to continue. Mr. Rupard replied that it is impossible to make future predictions, but their presentation showed the demographic trends as they currently stand.

Representative Brown pointed out that Black school disciplinary rates are high and asked if there is a correlation between school discipline and employment rates. Mr. Mudrak responded that KYSTATS would be able to look into that, but that they could not use the data presented to the Commission to make that connection. Ms. Fletcher said that KYSTATS would contact LRC staff to follow up on workforce outcomes.

Chairman Timoney said that Kentucky's population has increased, but more children are not being born, and asked whether that population increase was due to economic factors. Ms. Fletcher replied that KYSTATS currently has limited data on birth rates in Kentucky, and that they would like to work with the Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) in order to compile more accurate demographic data on births in Kentucky.

Senator Neal asked whether KYSTATS provided raw numbers for the data that they presented to the Commission as well as percentages. Ms. Fletcher responded that they would be able to get him that information. Senator Neal followed up and asked whether there was value in presenting the data sets as percentages as opposed to raw numbers. Mr. Rupard responded that it allows them to provide a like to like comparison across demographic groups.

Mr. Rupard said that Kentucky's median income increased from \$41,724 in 2012 to \$55,573 in 2021, and that all demographics saw some level of increase within that time period.

Chairman Timoney asked if the median income numbers could be compared with the poverty rate as a reference point in the future, as well as the impact of inflation and changes in purchasing power. Mr. Rupard said that they would be able to provide that later.

Senator Westerfield asked the presenters to define "non-institutional." Mr. Rupard responded that it represents individuals who are not incarcerated or in a K-12 environment who may be able to look for work or are currently looking for work.

Representative Kulkarni asked if the unemployment rate included individuals who were able and available to work but not necessarily looking. Mr. Rupard replied that that it does not because they are not participating in the workforce. Representative Kulkarni asked if it would be possible to see the demographic breakdown of individuals dropping out of the labor force. Mr. Rupard responded that they would look into it. Ms. Fletcher added that KYSTATS has labor market information under its purview, including WORKR, the Kentucky Workforce Dashboard, and the Kentucky Future Skills Report.

Chairman Timoney asked how current the labor market information is. Ms. Fletcher said that WORKR is updated quarterly and the Kentucky Future Skills Report is updated annually. Mr. Mudrak added that the Kentucky Workforce Dashboard is updated annually.

Chairman Timoney asked if county level data is available on WORKR. Mr. Mudrak said that it is,

and that WORKR provides data for workforce planning regions, as well.

Chairman Timoney thanked the presenters and asked if KYSTATS has a twitter page. Ms. Fletcher answered yes and that KYSTATS is available to the legislature for any of its needs.

Advance Kentucky - Computer Coding Initiative/Increasing Minority Participation

Monique Rice, Computer Science Initiatives Director, Advance Kentucky; Terry Samuel, President, Kentucky Science & Technology Corporation; and Dr. Sheri McGuffin, STEM Coordinator, Advance Kentucky presented on Advance Kentucky's Computer Coding Initiative. Advance Kentucky seeks to expand access to computer science education and increase minority participation in key computer science jobs available in Kentucky.

Ms. Rice said that there were approximately 5,088 computing jobs going unfilled in Kentucky as of 2022 that provided an average salary of \$74,833/year. However, there were only 706 computer science graduates from Kentucky's colleges and universities. She added that there are not enough students being produced in computer science to fill existing jobs in the field, much less any future jobs. Ms. Rice said that the racial and ethnic demographics of students participating in computer science courses is generally comparable to their proportion of the general population. She noted higher non-white participation in computer science in schools that are participants in Advance Kentucky's Computer Coding Initiative (CSI).

Ms. Rice said that CSI creates pathways for any certified teacher to receive approval to teach computer science or IT courses, provides professional learning for K-12 teachers through Advance Kentucky's partnerships, and assists school districts in developing a comprehensive K-12 computer science plan. Advance Kentucky's major partners include the Kentucky Department of Education's (KDE) Computer Science/IT Academy and Code.org. Dr. McGuffin added that other partners include CS for All, iCodeKY, Somerset Community College, the Expanding Computer Education Pathways Alliance, and CSTA Kentucky. Advance Kentucky and its partners provide both virtual and in-person educational opportunities for teachers.

Ms. Rice listed Code.org's nine policies to make computer science fundamental learning in schools and said that Kentucky has achieved seven of those, but in order to reach all nine, Kentucky would need to create programs at institutions of higher education to offer computer science to preservice teachers and require that all secondary schools offer computer science courses. Kentucky schools can opt into allowing computer science to satisfy a math or science K-12 credit. She also said that Code.org added a tenth policy recommendation to include a requirement for every student to take computer science in order to receive a high school diploma, which Kentucky does not do.

Ms. Rice added that there is significant work to be done to reach gender equity in computer science, in which female students and workers are extremely underrepresented.

Ms. Rice recommended that Kentucky should adopt the three additional Code.org policy recommendations and encourage students from underrepresented groups to participate and complete computer science pathways by continuing to develop and modernize them in order to make them more attractive to students and recognizing Area Technology Centers (ATCs) that offer pathways and encouraging more ATCs to offer them. She added that Advance Kentucky is hosting a Coding at the Capitol event on Tuesday, September 19, 2023.

Representative Kulkarni expressed concern that low-level coding education is becoming obsolete due to artificial intelligence (AI), and asked if the courses being offered to students are preparing them for higher level coding and programming positions that will still require humans in the future. Ms. Rice said that the majority of the computer science curriculum offered to K-12 students concerns internet literacy and familiarity with AI, in addition to low level programming. Students are also learning how to create websites and videogames in order to teach computer science problem solving. Dr. McGuffin added that the computer science pathways cross over with the manufacturing and engineering pathways. Mr. Samuel added that students still need to learn basic coding and programming knowledge in order to advance to more complicated subjects.

Representative Kulkarni said that there is fierce competition in the computer science labor market between American students and workers and foreign students and workers who are coming to the United States, and she expressed an interest in following up with Advance Kentucky regarding workforce readiness. Ms. Rice said that workforce readiness is part of their outreach focus in order to encourage more Kentuckians to work in the field.

Senator Neal thanked the presenters and said that the presentation was excellent.

Mr. Roberts asked if there are other barriers facing Kentuckians to an education and career that they were aware of but had not mentioned in the presentation. Dr. McGuffin said that one of the issues that they've identified is the STEM Cliff, which represents the drop in interest and enthusiasm for STEM studies and careers among students, particularly female students, beginning around middle school. She added that broadband access for students and teachers in their homes is also an issue. Ms. Rice added that the COVID-19 pandemic helped reveal just how many Americans do not have reliable internet access, and that computer science should not be thought of as an elective course.

In response to a question from Representative Brown, Ms. Rice reiterated the need for access to computer science programs at every school in Kentucky. Dr. McGuffin added that most schools offer digital literacy courses, but the meaning of digital literacy has changed.

Representative Brown expressed an interest in requiring computer science as a graduation requirement in Kentucky's K-12 schools.

Chairman Timoney said that the AI and cybersecurity fields are expanding and asked about access for elementary aged students. Ms. Rice said that they were unsure what and how much computer science is currently being taught in elementary schools.

Chairman Timoney said that Kentucky is experiencing manufacturing expansion, and that he would love to see the computer science labor pool for this expansion be homegrown.

Harbor House of Louisville

Maria Smith, CEO; Abby Whelan, Program Director; and Diane Clark, Grant Writer presented on Harbor House of Louisville. Harbor House of Louisville serves the disabled population in a variety of ways with an emphasis on workforce education. Ms. Clark said that Harbor House is a grassroots organization founded in 1992 by 11 parents of adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities. CEO Maria Smith has grown Harbor House to serve over 150 people currently.

Ms. Clark said that only 27 percent of disabled Kentuckians aged 25 to 65 are employed, as opposed to the average employment rate of 68 percent. Currently, Harbor House serves 28 zip codes, and the new center currently under construction will serve over 30 zip codes and more than 400 people daily across Jefferson, Bullitt, Oldham, and Shelby Counties.

Ms. Wheelan said that Harbor House provides services including Adult Day Training (ADT), Community Living Support (CLS), Personal Assistance (PA), respite care, teen life skills, transportation, Home-Sweet-Home Personal Service, bulk mail and fulfillment services, and supported employment. Harbor House's expansion will add an adult day health program, before and after school care; medical, dental, and spa services; a fitness center; hot meals prepared on site; expanded transportation services; a job apprenticeship program; music, dance, and art studios; a technology center; a child enrichment center; and extended stay respite care.

Ms. Smith said that Harbor House has an intergenerational vision to serve people of all ages and foster community between them. She said that the bulk mail and fulfillment center has become an excellent way for disabled individuals to not only make money but have a sense of community and satisfaction. Additionally, it gives them valuable job training that they can take out into the workforce after leaving Harbor House. Another Harbor House employment opportunity is its Home-Sweet-Home program, which nurtures intergenerational relationships by employing and training individuals with disabilities to provide in home service to seniors by performing activities such as light housekeeping and grocery shopping. She added that Harbor House will be adding an apprenticeship in its technology center and open it up to local businesses.

Ms. Smith extended an invitation for Commission members to tour Harbor House and invited the members to the ribbon cutting for Harbor House's new facility on September 22nd, a fundraising breakfast on August 17th, and a community open house in November.

Ms. Clark recognized Representative Kulkarni for her leadership in Louisville and Frankfort.

Senator Neal complimented the presenters and expressed an interest in touring Harbor House.

Representative Kulkarni thanked Chairman Timoney for allowing Harbor House onto this month's agenda and complimented Harbor House on the work that they are doing towards helping individuals with disabilities across all ages and socioeconomic statuses.

Adjournment

There being no further business, Chairman Timoney adjourned the meeting at 2:50 p.m.