

COMMISSION ON RACE & ACCESS TO OPPORTUNITY

Minutes

June 18, 2024

Call to Order and Roll Call

The first meeting of the Commission on Race & Access to Opportunity was held on June 18, 2024, at 1:00 PM in Room 129 of the Capitol Annex. Senator Amanda Mays Bledsoe, Chair, called the meeting to order, and the secretary called the roll.

Present were:

Members: Senator Amanda Mays Bledsoe Co-Chair; Representative Killian Timoney Co-Chair; Senator Gerald A. Neal; Representatives George Brown Jr., Samara Heavrin, and Nima Kulkarni; and Kimberly Baird.

Guests: Timothy Johnson, President and Chief Executive Officer, United Way of the Bluegrass (UWBG); Patrice Muhammad, Vice President of Community Impact, UWBG; Amy Luttrell, Chief Executive Officer, Goodwill Industries of Kentucky; and Adam Haley, Director of Policy and Strategy, Goodwill Industries of Kentucky.

LRC Staff: Brandon White and Logan Schaaf.

Juneteenth

Representative Brown noted that tomorrow (June 19) is Juneteenth and said that he would like to see a bill passed in the upcoming legislative session that would make Juneteenth a state holiday.

United Way of the Bluegrass - Marksbury Family WayPoint Center

Timothy Johnson, President and Chief Executive Officer of United Way of the Bluegrass (UWBG), and Patrice Muhammad, Vice President of Community Impact for UWBG, delivered a presentation on United Way's activities and provided an update on the Marksbury Family WayPoint Center in Lexington.

WayPoint centers coordinate an ecosystem of nonprofit, for-profit, and government programs to best serve local families. They offer people living in underserved neighborhoods and communities of color guidance on their path to financial stability, better physical and mental health, empowerment, and long-term success. WayPoint services aim to achieve stability, growth, and empowerment.

Ms. Muhammad highlighted the new Marksbury Family WayPoint Center, located at the

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historic Palmer Pharmacy building in Lexington.

Co-Chair Mays Bledsoe praised the restoration efforts at the Palmer Pharmacy building.

Responding to a question from Co-Chair Timoney, Ms. Muhammad discussed success stories and UWBG's data tracking process, particularly relating to financial health.

Senator Neal requested that future presenters provide data that can assist in the formulation of policy in areas where disparities may exist. He also emphasized the importance of attendance at Commission meetings.

Representative Heavrin discussed her experiences as a former Co-Chair of the Commission and also emphasized the importance of attendance.

Goodwill Industries - West Louisville Opportunity Center

Amy Luttrell, Chief Executive Officer of Goodwill Industries of Kentucky, and Adam Haley, Director of Policy and Strategy for Goodwill Industries of Kentucky, delivered a presentation on Goodwill Industries' activities and provided an update on the West Louisville Opportunity Center.

Opportunity Centers offer resources from a variety of partners who work to reduce barriers in health, housing, and transportation, to build skills, and to create a network of support, coordinated by a career coach.

Ms. Luttrell highlighted the new Norton Healthcare Opportunity Campus, which will be the first medical center built in West Louisville in more than 150 years.

Senator Neal praised the Opportunity Center. He requested additional data and recommendations for improvement.

Representative Kulkarni requested additional data and potential solutions for barrier reduction. She asked about the kinds of legal and transportation services provided by Goodwill. Ms. Luttrell said that they focus on several areas of legal services, including expungement, eviction prevention, and child support. She noted that Goodwill helps with car purchases, provides free bicycles or bus passes, and operates vans to take people to and from work.

Responding to a question from Representative Kulkarni, Ms. Luttrell said that while Goodwill has not created a program to facilitate business ownership, they have identified five organizations in Louisville that already do this, and they put people in contact with those businesses.

Responding to a question from Representative Heavrin, Ms. Luttrell discussed Goodwill's process for choosing partner organizations. They focus on overcoming barriers, filling gaps, and they look for organizations with good reputations.

Co-Chair Timoney discussed the problem of chronic absenteeism in education and expressed hope that transportation solutions could help address the issue.

Responding to a question from Co-Chair Mays Bledsoe, Ms. Luttrell discussed Goodwill's work in housing. They spend about \$2 million per year on housing and have 80 spots available. Everyone receives six months of free rent, and they must be working and saving money, attending budgeting classes, and taking drug tests. After participating in this Goodwill program, 62 percent of people go on to live in unsubsidized housing.

Adjournment

With no further business before the Commission, the meeting was adjourned at 2:30 PM.