

- Call to Order
- Approval of Minutes
- Legislative Advocacy Report - Robin Golden/Monique Geyer
- Values Statement Approval - Ed Dooling
- AJC Outreach Report & Site Analysis - Bill Villano
- Board Development and Nomination Report - Maria Harlow
- Other Business

## A G E N D A

March 23, 2023

Board of Directors Meeting



Workforce Alliance Meeting Minutes

January 26, 2023

Board Members attending: Chris Brown, Andrew Inorio, Serena Neal-Sanjurjo, Larry McHugh, Marcia LaFemina, Carl Bonamico, Robin Golden, Maria Harlow, Tom Coley, Howard Hill, Joe Williams, Mary Burgard, Chris Cozzi, Maya Alban, Lorna McLeod, Stephanie Wolfe

Staff: Bill Villano, Kymbel Branch, Josie Vazquez, John Brancato, Bobbi Brown, Jill Watson, Earl Foster

Invitees Attending: Christine Bjork, Mike Dunne, Lisa Sementilli, LuAnn Galliechio, Susan Kocaba, Amy P, Pamela Tonello, Sarah Griffin, J. Misenti, Erika Lynch, Amy Peltier, Madri Hall-Faul, Sarah Griffen, Manisha Srivastava

**Call to Order**

The meeting was called to order by Ms. Wolfe at 8:05 a.m.

**Approval of Minutes**

The minutes from the previous meeting were presented and with no changes the minutes were moved, seconded and approved unanimously.

**Introduction to Benefit Cliffs Issue**

Mr. Villano indicated that one element of the DEI Plan is to increase our external advocacy on behalf of racial/ethnic equity. Ms. Golden then introduced Amy Peltier and her staff from 2Gen to make a presentation on one of our legislative priorities, benefit cliffs. Ms. Golden added that essentially these "cliffs" occur when someone exceeds the income threshold for one or more benefits (housing, food stamps, healthcare) resulting in an immediate reduction in, or loss of the benefit.

Ms. Peltier started the presentation by saying that in 2015, CT passed legislation codifying a 2Gen initiative, adopting a comprehensive plan that links related support services that family's access.

What are Benefit Cliffs: Benefit cliffs occur when career advancement puts a family above the income eligibility threshold for public assistance programs. Ms. Peltier added that due to the loss of these programs, career advancement opportunities can result in the family being financially worse off or no better off than before the wage increase. Ms. Peltier continued with the presentation and showed some considerations for structuring benefit programs to avoid benefit cliffs:

1. Subsidies that provide the most for the lowest income

Mr. Villano noted that today we were supposed to discuss the Values Statement with breakout groups but unfortunately, we couldn't change the settings in the zoom. Mr. Villano then reminded the members that at the last board meeting the Mission and Vision Statements were approved by the full board. Mr. Villano then presented the Values Statement and said that the work group wanted to include certain language in the Values Statement like "continuously improving" our processes to make our services "responsive, equitable and inclusive". Under Customer Focused we emphasized "customer needs" and "customer's best interest"; under Diversity, "embrace and respect diversity" and "earn community trust through ethical, transparent and inclusive". Ms. Golden thought to have smaller work groups to see if there were things that we missed that needed to be changed but because of the settings with the zoom, the board members agreed to wait until the next meeting to go over the Values Statement.

**Board Discussion of Values Statement**

Ms. Hall-Faul continued with the presentation showing policy and programmatic solutions. She indicated that the way policies are structured, is that the Federal Government has discretion and latitude over the eligibility of some, like food stamps, SNAP and TANF for temporary assistance for needy families. The State has a lot more discretion and so we have to think about where Connecticut can impact these policies and cliffs. Some incremental policy solutions that we have identified that could address cliffs in Connecticut include disregarding the income that families make in the rental assistance program. There is some evidence that 18 to 24 year olds living with family that receive rental assistance are not entering the workforce because that income would make the family potentially ineligible or receive less of a benefit. Disregard of income for these young workers could help the family avoid one benefit cliff. Other possibilities are changes to the Temporary Family Assistance (TFA) program, adding a food supplement benefit and, finally, piloting a benefits cliffs mitigation program that extends that runway for families, gives them a set number of benefits or assistance over a period of years to allow them that on ramp to self-sufficiency while they work. Ms. Golden asked which of these needs legislative action, and which of them could be done without legislative action. Ms. Hall-Faul indicated that some initiatives could be done as pilots with philanthropic support. But many, if not all, would need legislative action. The Comprehensive Policy Solutions include: Permanent increase in state earned income tax credit; increased state funding for childcare, CT child tax credit and CT guaranteed income. We need to help families and employers better understand benefit cliffs. Families should be able to calculate changes in net financial resources for different work hours and wages. A tool customized for employers showing job pathways and how specific benefit packages could impact their employees. Mr. Hill wanted to know what the purpose of the presentation was, Ms. Golden noted that we're trying to move families into self-sufficiency and to be aware of the extent to which a decision about whether to take a job, whether to get a raise, will affect a person's subsidies. Ms. Golden thanked the 2Gen group for attending the meeting. to the people we serve.

2. Subsidies that slowly decrease as income increase, such that the benefit loss from an extra dollar in income is less than how much the family retains and can save and
3. The family is self-sufficient when they cross the exit threshold for the program.

Ms. Golden asked if clients are involved in any feedback. Ms. Branch said not yet as we wanted to present it to the full board first and then get input from staff and clients. Mr. Villano asked if we have had any focus groups, Mr. Branch said yes, the One Stop Operator has started that process and those sessions are more along the line of service provisions and what the clients say they need. After a discussion, Ms. Wolfe asked if we could remove the word "processes" with, "to make our services responsive, equitable and inclusive". Ms. Wolfe added that she likes continuously improve as it could be more than just processes. Ms. Golden added the words "commit to continuously improving all aspects of our work". Mr. Villano asked if we should wait until the next meeting to approve the statement, Ms. Wolfe said that we should get more feedback from staff and clients then present it at the next meeting. The members in attendance agreed to wait until the next board meeting.

With no other business the meeting adjourned at 9:05 a.m.

Submitted by,

Josie Vazquez  
Executive Assistant