

Montgomery County – Department of Health & Human Services (MCDHHS)
Asian American Health Initiative (AAHI) Steering Committee Meeting
Tuesday, January 14, 2020

Steering Committee	Present	AAHI Staff	Present
Organizational Members		Perry Chan	x
Ji-Young Cho	x	Betty Lam	
Wilbur Friedman	x	Elsa Lau	x
Michael Lin	x	Sanjana Quasem	x
Hina Mehta		Jasmine Vinh	x
Mayur Mody	x		
Sam Mukherjee	x		
Nguyen Nguyen (Chair)			
Tho Tran			
Thao Bui	x		
Sovan Tun	x		
Yuchi Huang	x		
Individual Members	Present	Guests	Present
Shruti Bhatnagar		Hoan Dang	x
Nerita Estampador		Crystal Townsend	x
Meng K. Lee (Vice-Chair)	x		
Sunmin Lee			
Cynthia Macri			
Judy Wang			
Affiliate Members	Present		
Anis Ahmed			

Welcome (Sam Mukherjee)

- Sam Mukherjee called the meeting to order at 6:19 PM.
- Perry Chan asked for permission to audio record the meeting. There were no objections.

ACTION: Audio recording of meeting was approved with no objections.

Presentation on Concept of Equity (Crystal Townsend)

- Sam introduced Crystal Townsend, President and Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of the Healthcare Initiative Foundation (HIF), a 501(c)(3) private foundation that provides grants to nonprofit organizations improve the quality and delivery of healthcare for Montgomery County residents.

- Crystal introduced herself and shared an overview of HIF and its history. HIF was established in 1973 and has invested approximately 84 million dollars in Montgomery County since its inception.
- Prior to 2000, HIF was primarily focused on healthcare access, mainly addressing the disparities, barriers, and affordability around access. In the early 2000s, HIF took a closer look into various factors that affect wellness, i.e. the social determinants of health, including transportation, emotional trauma, race, education, employment access, food insecurity, violence and safety, and environmental factors. HIF uses these components to create a healthy composite index score for a community.
- Crystal noted that only 20% of wellness has to do with health coverage and access.
- HIF works on projects that are not traditionally health related, such as employment.
 - Crystal referenced HIF's workforce pipeline project. Through this project, HIF provides scholarships for students to become healthcare professionals. In five years, HIF will have provided scholarships for 120 nurses, social workers and public health workers, who started at Montgomery College (MC) and then went onto the Universities at Shady Grove. About 80% of these healthcare workers are bilingual and multicultural.
 - HIF is also working to increase the number of bilingual therapists. HIF observed a shortage of therapists and discovered that the academic rigor of school and the challenge of learning English as a second language, prevented bilingual individuals from successfully completing their education. To address this issue, HIF added a paid bilingual mentoring program, in which a bilingual student would tutor another bilingual student and receive a scholarship while doing so. HIF also provided bilingual certification training, allowing students to earn a higher stipend and employability upon graduation. For MC students, textbooks are covered and emergency assistance funding and interprofessional education training.
 - Perry noted that one of AAHI staff, Jasmine Vinh, was a recipient of one of HIF nursing scholarships.
 - Crystal also shared that another one of HIF's scholarship recipients was an intern of Mayur Mody's at the American Diversity Group (ADG) and is now employed by ADG.
- Crystal continued that HIF also funds nonprofit organizations to take on "pre-sector positions" so that more internship opportunities in the community lead to gainful employment. HIF strives to ensure viable and livable wages while also influencing systemic changes so that the healthcare workforce mirrors the population they serve. This is only one of the contracts that HIF funds. HIF provides funding to about 39 nonprofit organizations in some capacity.

- Crystal emphasized that HIF looks systemically at their work. As a result of their work, all 11 safety net clinic organizations in the County now accept Medicaid and they share a common electronic medical record system.
- Crystal informed the SC that when researching root causes of health disparities, she realized that it is the same disparities in all other systems (i.e. education, incarceration), not just within health. The underlying issue is structural inequality.
- HIF worked with the Council of Government to create a report called “Uneven Opportunities Report.” Crystal referenced the unequal opportunities map as a visual aid, which can be viewed online at <https://hifmc.org/uneven-opportunities/>. This tool maps Montgomery County and shows by community and social determinants how long a resident is expected to live. Crystal demonstrated the interactive tool.
- HIF is working on “place-based” initiatives which encourages grant investment into historically underinvested areas. These areas include East County, Takoma Park, Long Branch, and Germantown. HIF’s goal is to coordinate resources that are integrated, multi-sectoral, and are all driving for change around certain goal areas.
- HIF also started to map their programming by household, in an effort to reduce multigenerational needs related to food security, healthcare coverage, and educational needs. In three years, this program has helped approximately 300 community members with an 80% success rate in completion of services.
- In the last grant cycle, HIF asked grantees to specify zip codes they plan to target so that HIF can mirror their funding. HIF promotes this best practice to other funders and to the County so that they can track their grants and compare it to the areas have been historically underinvested and need more support.
- Wilbur Friedman inquired if HIF is a 501(c)(3) organization.
 - Crystal replied that HIF is a 501(c)(3) and clarified that they do not fundraise in the community. HIF works off a financial portfolio and aligns funding as much as possible to avoid duplication (i.e. Worksource Montgomery partnered with HIF for the expansion of nursing scholarship funding at University of Maryland).
- Yuchi Huang asked if HIF is more interested in funding direct services or operations.
 - Crystal noted that many of the proposals coming in for the collective impact model and the importance of balancing self-assessment of their operations and systems while providing quality direct services in the community.
 - Yuchi inquired about the criteria or mechanism to find the balance.
 - Crystal clarified she is using a two-pronged approach: internal and external. She stated that they worked with the CommonHealth ACTION Network to internally review HIFs proposals for oppressive language (i.e. “at-risk youth”, “vulnerable populations”, “people in-need”) to move

towards strength-based language and change the nuance of how they are viewing people.

- Crystal had transparent conversations with the grantees to examine the power dynamics of the grantor-grantee relationship, and how grantees view HIF's practices to avoid perpetuating a cycle of dominance as a "gatekeeper of investments."
- Crystal states that a big change was HIF transitioning to a local financial institution, instead of becoming a large conglomerate, and supporting smaller local businesses in their internal practices with an equity lens.
- Crystal elaborates that HIF has their staff attend a 2-day Racial Equity Institute workshop through Leadership Montgomery, the Diversity and Inclusion training through CommonHealth ACTION, and the Racial Equity Action Leadership (REAL) Inclusion program through Leadership Montgomery.
 - Sam added that he attended the training, which was well-received. He noted that under the new County Executive, social justice and racial equity are the main focuses for the administration. He asked Crystal how HIF's work is addressing this.
 - Crystal gave the example of her team needing to take a proactive approach to track students who participate in their scholarship program. Crystal personally met with students to ensure that no student falls through the program due to systemic barriers, such as the inability to pay bills or for childcare services. To Crystal, social justice is about keeping people in the game by providing direct cash transfers to families for necessary life expenses, instead of letting these systemic barriers impede their academic pursuit and success. Direct cash transfers allow families to use cash for whatever they deem necessary (i.e. transportation, shoes, childcare, job certification, etc.), which in turn adds value back into the economy.
 - Wilbur inquired if direct cash transfers would cause families who already receive assistance from government programs to have their support withdrawn.
 - Crystal responded that funds consist of public dollars, philanthropy, and the funds from investors of the nation-wide Family Independence Initiative. There is a huge gap between eligibility services and the cost of living in Montgomery County. The direct cash transfers will help families curb emergency expenses and keep them from turning back to eligibility services, ultimately saving public dollars.
- Yuchi asked if the Steering Committee could obtain copy of HIF's Uneven Opportunities report.
 - Crystal said that the report is available online at <https://hifmc.org/uneven-opportunities/> and an electronic version can be emailed to the Steering Committee. She mentioned that a compendium will be added, most likely in the spring, on the interrelations between race and health.

ACTION ITEM: AAHI will email the PDF of HIF's Uneven Opportunities Report to the Steering Committee.

- Yuchi asked if social justice means equal access to different opportunities.
 - Crystal replied that, from her point of view, equity means each individual gets what they need to succeed and thrive, which is not the same for everyone.
 - Yuchi asked how to deal with the inequity of the results because the access does not guarantee the outcome.
 - Crystal responded that people are not given equal starts. Looking at the data from school readiness scores, there are disparities in academic achievements of children entering kindergarten. She noted a study by Identity, Inc. that found that Latino families were not accessing early care for their children because parents had experienced trauma themselves as a child, and therefore wanted to be in charge of their children's care. She wants to change these families' stories so that children are getting the tools that they need to meet benchmarks.
- Sam inquired if outcomes can be relative to an individual's needs. As a program, we may expect similar outcomes among the families receiving the same service; however, some families may need more resources while others thrive.
 - Crystal refers to a conversation she had with the American Health Association (AHA), in which it was brought up that while clinicians can create concrete protocols on standards of practice and referral recommendations, a lot of the interventions actually occur in the home. She asked AHA how they can prove success and set realistic expectations when only a small portion of what they can control is in the medical office.
 - Crystal recommended that these organizations need to engage minority health initiatives, such as AAHI, to examine these barriers and tailor the message to families so that they are more receptive to the information.
- Yuchi asked if HIF offers trainings to change leaders' mindset and create a paradigm shift for equity.
 - Crystal responded that shifting the paradigm goes beyond just online training. Crystal used the example of the integration of trauma-informed practices in schools, which involves trainings for health coordinators and follow-up support groups by classroom cohorts.
- Sam asked if HIF trains community health workers (CHWs).
 - Crystal replied that HIF provides funding to the Institute of Public Health Innovation (IPHI) and the Community Health and Empowerment Through Education and Research (CHEER), both who have CHW training programs.

- Crystal noted that HIF received a \$1 million bond bill to create a non-profit service hub in Germantown, with matching support from the County and a church, for non-profits to provide services. She urged anyone who knows of a space of at least 5,000 square feet in Germantown to let her know.
- Crystal also added that HIF is partnering with the Children’s Opportunity Fund and Colombia Lighthouse for the Blind to expand their vision exams and eyeglasses services from four schools to 18 schools.

Approval of Agenda (Sam Mukherjee)

- Today’s meeting agenda was shared with members prior to the meeting. Sam asked if there were any objections to the agenda.
- Wilbur moved to approve the meeting minutes. Yuchi seconded the motion. The meeting agenda was approved.

ACTION: Meeting agenda was approved with no objections.

Approval of Meeting Minutes (Sam Mukherjee)

- The SC meeting minutes from Tuesday, November 12, 2019 were shared with members prior to today’s meeting.
- A motion to approve the November meeting minutes was presented. Yuchi moved to adopt the minutes and Wilbur seconded the motion. The minutes were approved.

ACTION: Meeting minutes approved with no objections.

Program Updates

- Perry reported that the AAHI Blueprint is almost complete and is undergoing internal review by the Department before publication. A draft of the Blueprint was circulated around the room. Perry informed the SC that AAHI is planning a launch event sometime in late February or early March. Perry requested the SC share any suggestions for the launch within the next week.
 - Sam inquired if AAHI has the funds to host a large-scale launch.
 - Perry replied that program staff can handle most things in-house, which will cut down on the cost of the event.

ACTION ITEM: Perry will forward available dates to the Steering Committee and solicit ideas for launch activities.

- Perry pointed the SC’s attention to a few new AAHI giveaways geared towards pedestrian safety, including multi-colored light-up armbands and reflective clips. He noted that there is a high number of traffic incidents involving Asian American community members and that these items may be helpful for seniors who may be crossing the street when it is dark outside.

- Sam mentioned that a couple weeks ago, an Asian pedestrian was killed after being struck by a vehicle in Silver Spring. She was the sole earner of her household, with a dependent mother in her 90s. Sam stated that he wants to find out more information and what support can be offered.
- Perry asked Sam to reach out to him if there is any support AAHI can offer to the family.
- Mayur suggested that the SC and AAHI should have an action plan for similar incidents in the future, especially for Asian Americans who do not speak English.
- Sam noted that this is a data problem because Vision Zero does not currently have data on Asian Americans. There will be a meeting tomorrow with County Executive Marc Elrich, at which the SC can emphasize the importance of this issue, but that they will need data to support their stance.
- Perry replied that data for Asian American pedestrian accidents was presented at a previous meeting based on police reports in 2018.
- Sanjana Quasem added that AAHI is continuing to monitor those reports.
- Perry updated the SC on the Mental Health Photonovel #6, which is focused on caregiver stress. AAHI is in the process of inserting pictures for the publication. AAHI needs actors for the Korean, Vietnamese, and Asian Indian versions. Perry noted that due to the complexity of the issue, the Photonovel will be a longer than previous volumes. He specified that they need three actors (two females, one male) per language volume.
- Perry added that the project is interactive and impactful because it involves the community to take part in its development.

ACTION ITEM: Perry will email the Photonovel #6 actor recruitment flyer to SC members to forward to those who may be interested.

Updates from Liaisons and Members

- **Healthy Montgomery (Nguyen Nguyen)**
 - Representative was not present for update.
- **County Executive Asian American Advisory Committee (Sovan Tun, Sam Mukherjee)**
 - Sovan informed the SC that there was a potluck meeting on December 12th, at which the County Executive Marc Elrich was present. The conversation was focused on grants. It was mentioned in the discussion that by funding larger organizations, the County saves money because smaller organizations tend to use the funds for capacity-building, not necessarily for programs. Sovan responded at the meeting that smaller organizations use their network of volunteers to facilitate their work which helps to save money, but he was unsure about the efficacy of his reasoning to the County Executive.

- Mayur shared his experience with the County's community grant process, which had many barriers and was time-consuming.
- Mayur and Sam discussed grant management issues. If money is given to bigger organizations, they save money and so giving to smaller organizations is seen as a waste of money. Sovan informed the Committee that he made a counter argument but did not feel he was convincing.
- **The Governor's Commission on Asian American Affairs (Sovan Tun)**
 - The November 13th meeting focused on the U.S Census. A representative from the Governor's office was recruiting panelists for Maryland Heritage Area grants for the FY2021 cycle. The Maryland Heritage grant is for history preservation, tourism, natural resources. The deadline to apply for the position had already passed, which was two days after the meeting took place.
 - Sovan also mentioned the Director of Communications added the biographies of the Commissioners on the Governor's website.
- **The Governor's Commission on South Asian American Affairs (Mayur Mody)**
 - At the last meeting, the focus was also on the U.S. Census and increasing the involvement of South Asians. The Director of Communications gave a presentation on the Governor's community initiatives.
 - The Commission is working on a health book for Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs that has been approved by the Department of Health. A soft launch was done with Yumi Hogan and will have a major launch sometime in May and distributed in hospitals. The book will provide information on religious nuances (food habits, prayers, etc.) of Hindus, Muslims, and Sikhs.
- **Commission on Aging (Tho Tran)**
 - Representative was not present for update.
- **Other Updates**
 - Thao Bui is the new Executive Director of the Association of Vietnamese Americans (AVA). Thomas Tran retired from the organization, effective December 31, 2019.

Adjourn

- Sam adjourned the meeting at 7:44 PM.

ACTION: Meeting adjourned at 7:44 PM.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 10, 2020