

**NCDHHS OFFICE OF MINORITY HEALTH AND HEALTH DISPARITIES - OMHHD**  
**JUNE 17, 2025 | 10 AM – MHAC MEETING MINUTES**

**Opening/Welcome** – Dr. Portia Pope, Acting Director – OMHHD

**Roll Call & Introductions** – Luis T. Garcia Abundis, Data/Evaluation Program Mgr. - OMHHD

	Name	Title	Key
1 – X	Dr. Gary R. Gunderson	Health Related Agency Representative	Governor
2 – ✓	Dr. Gabriela M. Plasencia	Public Health Representative	Governor
3 – X	Dr. Cherry Maynor Beasley	Community-Based Org. Representative	Governor
4 – ✓	Dr. Ronny A. Bell	Human Services Agency Representative	Governor
5 – X	Dr. Natasha Adams-Denny	Health Care Provider Representative	Governor
6 – X	Dr. Lawrence R. Wu	Public Health Representative	House of Representatives
7 – X	Hon. Donna M. White	Member of the NC House of Representatives	House of Representatives
8 – X	Hon. Carla D. Cunningham	NC House of Representatives	House of Representatives
9 – ✓	Dr. Chere M. Gregory	Public Health Representative	House of Representatives
10 – ✓	Hon. Donyel Barber	NC House of Representatives	House of Representatives
11 – X	Dr. Catherine Evans	Appointed 7/1/2024	Senate
12 – X	Hon. Gladys A. Robinson	Member of the NC Senate	Senate
13 – X	Brenda J. Smith	Public Member	Senate
14 – ✓	Dr. Olugbemiga E. Jegede	Appointed 7/1/2024	Senate

^Attendance: **X – absent**    **✓ - present**

**Other attendees:** Dr. Portia Pope; Paige Wyrick; Luis T. Garcia Abundis; DeNita Nash; Debra Farrington; LaQuana Palmer; Tatiana Moore;

**NCDHHS OMHHD EL&OIP Interns** – Gabriela Weidman (App State); Cameron Bradley (FSU); Na’Kiah Smith (Catawba College)

- Dr. Pope welcomed MHAC members to the June MHAC meeting

### Medicaid Updates

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LaQuana Palmer, Deputy Director of Communications and Engagement Division of Health Benefits gives an update on federal Medicaid, budget reconciliation process, 1115 Waiver Renewal, Healthy Opportunities Pilot Program, Children and Families Specialty Plan (CFSP), and Medicaid Advisory Committee/Beneficiary Advisory Council training

### Meeting Objectives (Porita)

- Enable MHAC members to better understand how NCDHHS and OMHHD function to eliminate health disparities and serve the people of NC

- Leverage the expertise of MHAC members to inform and support NCDHHS priorities related to addressing health disparities and provide a call to action for member involvement, feedback, and input
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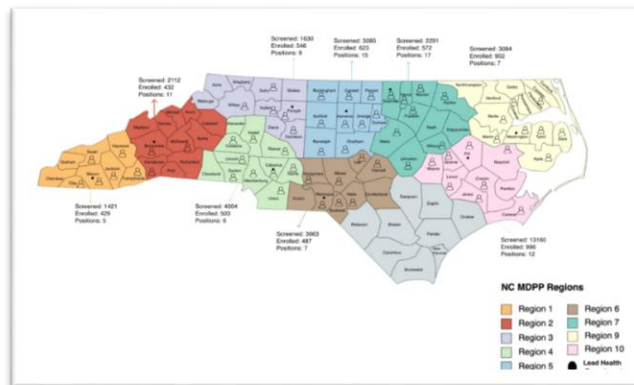
### Office of Minority Health & Health Disparities Updates by Dr. Portia Pope

- **New NCDHHS State Health Director**
  - Secretary Sangvai has appointed Dr. Lawrence Greenblatt as the State Health Director and Chief Medicaid Officer for NCDHHS. He began his duties on Monday, June 2<sup>nd</sup>
  - He brings over 30 years of experience as a general internist, educator, and leader in Medicaid policy at Duke University Health System, where he spearheaded efforts to integrate behavioral health and addiction services into primary care
  - He launched one of the nation's first academic initiatives for opioid use disorder, and has co-led major initiatives like the Durham Crisis Collaborative to improve local mental health planning
- **DHHS Office of Minority Health**
  - US DHHS Office of Minority Health Director, the Honorable CAPT Mahyar Mofidi has established seven core priorities and strategic areas for the office
    - Those priorities include:
      - enhancing data collection and analysis; developing and implementing targeted interventions; promoting language access and health literacy; strengthening the health workforce; fostering community engagement and partnerships; advancing research and evaluation; supporting policy development
    - Make America Healthy Again (MAHA)
      - Public health campaign launched in 2024, prominently featuring figures like Robert F. Kennedy Jr and Dr. Phil. Initiative emphasizes addressing chronic health issues, such as obesity, diabetes, and mental health disorders, by promoting preventive care, lifestyle changes. Advocates for reducing, pharmaceutical dependence and enhancing public health education
    - Call to Action for MHAC Strategic Planning
      - Preparation of the Strategic planning process for OMH this Fall 2025, following the completion of the DHHS Strategic Plan in September 2025

- **Strengthening Pathways to Access to Care**
  - Sessions aim to provide health navigation information to equip community health workers, faith institutions, and community organizations with the tools and information needed to help individuals navigate the different pathways that currently exist to access health coverage and services. The goals of the sessions are to increase access to primary care, preventive screenings, and health care management services.
    - Shared upcoming training dates and special topic focus for each session.
  - Informational Session for Region 4 took place on April 24<sup>th</sup>, 2025, in Chapel Hill and upcoming training will take place in Greenville
  - Extended gratitude to external partners for their ongoing support
  - Partners for Region 6 Access to Care Training, of which external partners will be presenting and supporting during the session in Greenville, NC on June 17
- **Blue Cross Blue Shield (BCBS) Presentation**
  - On April 30<sup>th</sup>, 2025, our office gave a presentation to BCBS of NC on our Health Disparities Analysis Report and over 200 people were in attendance. The attendees learned about the impact our report has created for the health and well-being of all North Carolinians
- **New Team Community and Partner Engagement Program Manager - Polly!**
  - Licensed clinical social worker with over 10 years of experience providing mental health services and promoting community wellness. We are so excited to have Polly on our team!
- **Recognition & Awards**
  - Dr. Pope received the Cherly Boyce Leadership Award for her visionary leadership and transformative systems work through her groundbreaking leadership in implementing the Health Equity Framework across NCDHHS
  - Victoria Zampieri, Latinx Policy Strategy Program Manager received the Distinguished Volunteer Service Award from the Duke Cancer Institute, Office of Community Outreach, Engagement, and Equity for the cancer prevention work she has done with Duke Cancer Institute
  - Luis Garcia Abundis, Data and Evaluation Program Manager, has been selected as a 2025 LatinxED Fellow and accepted into the University of

Chicago Harris School of Public Policy, Policy Innovation and Research  
Certificate Program

- **Minority Diabetes Prevention Program (MDPP) Updates – Tatiana Moore**
  - County Representation and Impact Since 2017
    - A map was shown (which is below) on the county representation and impact that the MDPP has created.
    - Currently, the MDPP still has counties that it is trying to reach for accessibility.



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### Department Updates: Deputy Secretary Debra Farrington

- Important updates on the ongoing efforts of the office and department towards continuing to expand healthcare accessibility for all communities
- Congressional updates on the state House and Senate Bill and the federal budget impacts
- **Questions & Comments**
  - **Dr. Gabriela Plasencia** had a question on how the department hopes to continue to foster inclusivity for all communities
  - **Dr. Jegede** provided some resources and an upcoming event that will take place at Cone Health

### 7. Q&A, Open Discussion, and Closing

- **Questions Addressed**

**Closing Remarks from Dr. Pope**

- Post-MHAC meeting survey link: [MHAC meeting](#)