

# Community Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention Commission

Meeting Minutes  
 November 16, 2023  
 3:00 - 4:30 pm

Date of meeting: Thursday, November 16, 2023

Start time: 3:05 pm

End time: 4:30 pm

Location: Virtual Meeting (Zoom)

Members participating		Vote I*
1	<b>Kiame Mahaniah</b> – Executive Office of Health and Human Services ( <i>chair</i> )	X
2	<b>Gabe Adams-Keane</b> – Office of Senator John Velis ( <i>designee of Chair Velis</i> )	X
3	<b>Nancy Allen Scannell</b> – Mass. Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children	X
4	<b>Jen Barrelle</b> – Department of Public Health ( <i>designee of Commissioner Goldstein</i> )	X
5	<b>Lisette Blondet</b> – Mass. Association of Community Health Workers	-
6	<b>Diana Cabrera</b> – Office of Senator Pavel Payano ( <i>designee of Senator Payano</i> )	X
7	<b>Georgia Critsley</b> – Trial Court ( <i>designee of Chief Justice Locke</i> )	X
8	<b>Yaminette Diaz-Linhart</b> – National Association of Social Workers – Mass.	X
9	<b>Margaret Hannah</b> – Freedman Center at William James College	X
10	<b>Jessica Larochelle</b> – Mass. Association for Mental Health	X
11	<b>Jennifer L'Heureux</b> – Office of Representative Tram Nguyen ( <i>designee of Rep. Nguyen</i> )	-
12	<b>Adrian Madaro</b> – Mass. House of Representatives	-
13	<b>Danna Mauch</b> – Mass. Association for Mental Health	X
14	<b>Carlene Pavlos</b> – Mass. Public Health Association	X
15	<b>Denise Pixley</b> – Mass. Organization for Addiction Recovery	-
16	<b>Myisha Rodrigues</b> – National Alliance on Mental Illness – Mass.	X
17	<b>Emma Schlitzer</b> – CHIA ( <i>designee of Executive Director Peters</i> )	X
18	<b>James Vetter</b> – Social Emotional Learning Alliance for Mass.	X
19	<b>Wanda Visnick</b> – Justice Resource Institute	-
20	<b>Charlene Zuffante</b> – Department of Mental Health ( <i>designee of Commissioner Doyle</i> )	X
21	<i>Vacant – Association for Behavioral Healthcare</i>	-

\* (X) Voted in favor; (O) Opposed; (A) Abstained from vote; (-) Absent from meeting or during vote

## **Proceedings**

Executive Office of Health and Human Services Undersecretary for Health Kiame Mahaniah called the meeting to order at 3:05 pm. He introduced himself as Secretary Walsh's designee to chair the Commission. He informed members that the Commission is subject to the Open Meeting Law and any votes taken during the meeting would be conducted via roll-call vote.

Gabriel Cohen from the Executive Office of Health and Human Services (EOHHS) administered the oath of office to members. He provided a brief overview of the Open Meeting Law and Conflict of Interest requirements the Commission and its members are subject to by virtue of their service on the Commission. For additional details, refer to the meeting's slides on the Commission's [Meeting Materials webpage](#).

Undersecretary Mahaniah formally welcomed members to the Commission. He introduced himself, highlighting his experience as a primary care physician caring for patients seeking substance use disorder treatment at the community health center level. He detailed his focus on improving the coordination of behavioral health services across the Secretariat, which would be aided by the newly-established Office of Behavioral Health Promotion (OBHP).

Members briefly introduced themselves to the group.

Undersecretary Mahaniah explained that since their last meeting, a letter was submitted on behalf of the Commission that summarized the recent statutory updates to the Commission's charge, including serving in an advisory role to the OBHP. He explained that the letter stated that the Community Behavioral Health Promotion and Prevention Trust Fund currently has revenues of over \$14 million, which the statute specifies the EOHHS Secretary is authorized to spend on supporting critical public health needs affecting children and young adults, and for grants to community organizations to establish or support evidence-based and evidence-informed programs for children and young adults, in consultation with the Commission. Undersecretary Mahaniah acknowledged the work that members undertook in the first years of the Commission to develop various proposals to utilize these funds.

Undersecretary of Human Services Mary McGeown joined the meeting to outline a proposal related to the Trust Fund, which would include setting aside half of the existing funds as a reserve to ensure sustained funding for any future initiatives. She explained that with the other half, roughly \$7 million and increasing by approximately \$4 million annually, a number of objectives could be accomplished in addition to funding grants to support community organizations to establish or support evidence-based and evidence-informed programs for children and young adults. Undersecretary McGeown explained that legislation passed in the prior year (Chapter 177 of the Acts of 2022: An Act Addressing Barriers to Care for Mental Health) included a provision requiring EOHHS to establish an Interagency Review Team (IRT) to better coordinate and expedite support for youth with complex behavioral health or special needs. She proposed that a portion of the Trust Fund be utilized to establish both the IRT, through the hiring of two to three full-time staff, as well as the OBHP, through the hiring of its Director.

Members shared their reactions to the proposal, including concerns regarding the coordination and communication between the Commission and the Secretariat; the need to tap into the expertise on the Commission regarding frameworks for integrating upstream promotion and prevention of behavioral health; the importance of taking into account social determinants of health in addressing the behavioral health needs of historically-marginalized populations; the need for greater emphasis on the Commission's charge to focus on upstream promotion and prevention and the root causes of downstream behavioral health needs; and the importance of coordinating upstream prevention initiatives with other agencies operating in that space, such as the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).

Undersecretary Mahaniah provided a brief overview of the proposed organizational structure of the OBHP, noting that the Office's staff would be solely focused on addressing the need for greater coordination of promotion and prevention activities within the Secretariat. He noted that the individual would have a direct link to EOHHS leadership, but be administratively located within the Department of Mental Health (DMH). The OBHP would receive support from the DMH Commissioner, but be empowered to act autonomously.

Senator Payano left the meeting at approximately 4:00 pm, at which point Diana Cabrera, his designee, joined the meeting.

DMH Commissioner Brooke Doyle joined the meeting to provide additional information on the proposed structure of the OBHP and an update on the ongoing efforts to recruit the Office's Director. She noted that the position had been elevated to the level of Assistant Commissioner, and the job listing had been posted within the prior week. She outlined her Office's goal that the candidate be someone who brings a broad range of experience, including knowledge of evidence-based practices, upstream promotion work, and the importance of social determinants of health, and who is reflective of a diverse experience. She explained that the job posting would remain active for thirty days and encouraged members to share the posting within their professional networks. As a sign of her commitment to the Commission's work, Commissioner Doyle offered to attend the Commission's meetings until the position is filled.

Undersecretary Mahaniah noted that based on recent discussions with the Chairs of the Joint Committee on Mental Health, Substance Use and Recovery, services focused on promotion of behavioral health and prevention activities within the schools were one of their main priorities they cited.

At 4:15 pm, Ms. Blondet left the meeting.

In response to members' feedback regarding the frequency of meetings and potential continuation of workgroups to move the work forward in between Commission meetings, Undersecretary Mahaniah noted that he would work with his staff to revisit the proposed schedule for the coming year.

Ms. Pavlos requested that the Commission receive a spending plan or proposed budget for the coming year, detailing any projected expenditures from the Trust Fund as well as the anticipated revenues. In addition, she recommended that the Commission develop guidelines related to promoting and ensuring equity and listening to community voices in developing recommendations and grant proposals.

Ms. Allen Scannell proposed that the Commission review the proposals that members previously developed to see whether any recommendations could be advanced to the EOHHS Secretary in the coming year.

Mr. Vetter requested that the Commission continue to clarify its role and advisory relationship with the EOHHS Secretary and soon-to-be-hired Assistant Commissioner of OBHP.

**Vote I to adjourn:** Undersecretary Mahaniah requested a motion to adjourn. Dr. Mauch introduced the motion, which was seconded by Mr. Vetter and approved by roll-call vote (see detailed record of votes above).

The meeting was adjourned at 4:30 pm.

#### Meeting Materials

##### I. Commission presentation