

Unified Economic Opportunity Commission

OVERVIEW

ENTITY | WOMEN IN THE ECONOMY SUBCOMMITTEE

DATE | May 24, 2023

TIME | 10:00AM–11:30AM

LOCATION | Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity – Canyonlands Conference Room

AGENDA

10:00 AM – Welcome & Introductions, Co-Chair Sen. Luz Escamilla

Sen. Luz Escamilla welcomed everyone and members, staff, and guests introduced themselves. Escamilla thanked Co-Chair Melissa Freigang for her work on the subcommittee.

10:15 AM – Overview of statute changes & WIES rules and responsibilities, Kori Ann Edwards

Kori Ann Edwards explained the positioning of the Women in the Economy Subcommittee (WIES) underneath the Unified Economic Opportunity Commission (UEOC) and gave an overview of statute changes from General Session 2023. She continued by walking the subcommittee through its purpose, powers, and duties as they are outlined in Utah Code. She reassured members that the four legislators on the subcommittee are effective and ready to help the group achieve real change.

10:20 AM – Swearing in of new members, Amanda Goodell

Amanda Goodell of the Governor’s Office guided all subcommittee members present in-person through the process of taking the Oath of Office. After swearing them in, she collected and notarized their signatures.

10:25 AM – Nomination & Election of new Co-Chairs, Kori Ann Edwards

Edwards recommended Sen. Luz Escamilla and Rep. Karianne Lisonbee as co-chairs of the subcommittee on behalf of President of the Senate Stuart Adams and Speaker of the House of Representatives Brad Wilson, respectively.

- Motion: Kori Ann Edwards
- Second: Melissa Freigang
- Motion passed unanimously

Rep. Karianne Lisonbee said she looks forward to working on issues related to women in Utah's economy, specifically mentioning the subcommittee's focus on childcare and its great impact.

Escamilla agreed, saying that she hopes that more and more women can have access to high quality, affordable childcare. She expressed her excitement to work on a range of other issues that affect women in the state.

10:30 AM – Overview of UEOC, meeting goals, and UEOC timeline/expectations, Kyle Palmer

Kyle Palmer started by noting that this meeting was the best attended he'd ever seen. The UEOC, he continued, is a body that transcends the silos of the legislative and executive branches and local government, allowing everyone to come to the table to collaborate on significant challenges. Just last year, the Legislature passed 19 bills that were supported by the UEOC, along with other partners, including various other departments, issue experts, and industry representatives.

Palmer referred to a document outlining a timeline for the work of the UEOC, explaining that the objective of the WIES is to prepare policy recommendations in time for interim committee meetings. He encouraged members to lean in and volunteer where they can.

Escamilla complimented the group's diversity, saying this will be a great strength.

10:35 AM – Review last year's successes and unfinished business, Abby Hunsaker

Abby Hunsaker reviewed the WIES's support of HB 477 Full-Day Kindergarten Amendments, emphasizing that many groups are responsible for its success. She continued with a brief overview of the Childcare Solutions & Workforce Productivity Plan.

Escamilla added that the WIES may play a supporting role at times, like it did with the expansion of full-day kindergarten. She continued with further explanation of the strategic plan, emphasizing that this will allow state and local leaders to look at all the moving pieces in the childcare industry in order to make informed decisions. This will be a multilayered and multifaceted approach.

10:30 AM – Brainstorm new policy ideas and WIES-funded projects, new Co-Chairs

Escamilla opened the meeting to brainstorming and encouraged participation, including from the public.

Heather Brace shared her thoughts on the importance of workplace flexibility, especially to working mothers. The COVID-19 pandemic forced the workplace to

adapt hours and offer more hybrid and work-from-home options, which proved to work well with the demands of family life and work-life balance.

Tina Hazlett mentioned the benefits of job sharing, especially in small businesses.

Edwards asked if part time positions are typically offering benefits in these cases, and Hazlett responded that they are not.

Freigang brought up the wage gap.

Sen. Ann Millner added her thoughts on flexibility, mentioning the work of NCSL and other states in this area. She believes policy can support these efforts.

Freigang said she would like to see the group maintain a continuum of the meaning of the words “women” and “economy.” She mentioned challenges faced by women, including homelessness and domestic violence.

Rep. Rosemary Lesser commented on Millner’s thoughts, adding that part time work is more common in Utah than in many other states. At the same time, we have an amazing group of female entrepreneurs. She wonders if the group could coordinate the services offered by the SBA and women’s centers to create an infrastructure for benefits in a way that would meet the needs of part time workers, given that it is so dominant here.

Millner offered an example of this from the higher education system. The institution pays a portion to a retirement fund. Originally, this was done to promote mobility from state to state for professors. The private sector could run something similar. Escamilla suggested the term “a la carte” to describe benefits like these. Millner agreed, saying that not every person wants the same benefits.

Brace suggested that the group look at ways to promote workforce re-entry. Edwards explained recent efforts in state government to address this, specifically the returnship program. At the Governor’s Office of Economic Opportunity, she said, returnships have proven to add valuable talent. She drew the group’s attention to Talent Ready’s grant program which helps industries pilot a similar program. Once data is available on these pilot programs, the group might

Freigang added women leaving incarceration and military wives to this discussion. This is not just a women’s issue; it’s a family issue.

Lisonbee mentioned a couple of bills she has run recently to address issues in the adult probation and parole (AP&P) space. She has been thinking about a way to make incentives apply at the individual level for re-entry.

Morgan Lyon Cotti wondered how legislators might be able to support nontraditional students. She agreed with previous thoughts on addressing the wage gap. Lisonbee said she would like the group's work in this area to consider how these efforts might negatively affect the flexibility that women need and want in the workplace.

Edwards informed the group that Aimee Winder Newton, Director of the Office of Families, will be a good resource and partner for the subcommittee in these policy areas.

Freigang suggested that members consider promoting social capital for women in the state, since connections are the most reliable avenues to success.

Natalie Kaddas said this resonated with her. She has seen examples of a lack of this. She also brought up the importance of promoting women's mental health.

Kelly Vincent said she believes it is important to address internal barriers. She has also seen a lot of states implementing policies that require wage transparency in job postings.

Escamilla explained that UEOC staff will consolidate these ideas. Members discussed best practices for ranking and then pursuing priorities throughout the year, and ultimately decided to begin this process using a Google survey.

Edwards informed members of the Inspire in Utah campaign which provides a variety of business resources. She encouraged everyone to look into its new initiative, 100 Companies Championing Women. This could be a good targeted industry audience; many of them are implementing policies that the subcommittee has discussed in this meeting. Members discussed ways to engage with these companies and decided again to use a survey.

Escamilla said that legislators have talked with many of these companies to learn more. Edwards added that there will be an Inspire in Utah event with the governor on August 1, 2023, and Escamilla suggested that the subcommittee consider attending and finding ways to learn from private sector successes.

Lesser added that with Mayor Debbie Winn on the subcommittee now, it would be wise to partner with cities to learn about their visions. She believes it is attainable to aim to capture more cities and scaffold their efforts to champion women and family-friendly policy. Lyon Cotti named Molly Wheeler with the League of Cities and Towns as a potential resource and partner.

Freigang suggested partnering with counties as well in these efforts.

Lisonbee reminded the group of the importance of narrowing its scope in order to accomplish meaningful policy changes. The four legislators on the subcommittee, she said, can help the group to see that well-vetted recommendations become policy.

Nate McDonald added to this by sharing the example of the evolution of the Commission on Housing Affordability, which previously struggled to coordinate efforts due to siloing across different housing groups. After being positioned under the UEOC and given legislative leadership, it is now regarded as the most impactful housing policy group. This is due to a renewed focus.

Freigang said siloing has been this group's greatest challenges in the past, but she believes that it can be overcome with these changes.

Concetta Defa added her thoughts on workplace flexibility and re-entry into the workforce. She volunteered to help with efforts to improve apprenticeship programs. Group members discussed solving flexibility issues organically this way and through tech school pipelines.

Lisonbee added that those leaving incarceration are benefited greatly by apprenticeships. Escamilla pointed out that these people lose benefits after working hard to reintegrate into society; they are being thrown into a "benefits cliff." She and Rep. Melissa Ballard are working on this.

11:20 AM – Determine pacing of subcommittee meetings and next steps, Palmer

Next meetings:

June 28, 2023 at 2:00PM-3:30PM

August 2, 2023 at 10:00AM-11:30AM

11:25 AM – Public Comment

Emily Carr, a new employee of the Weber County Prosperity Center of Excellence, said she appreciates the subcommittee's efforts to create a community in Utah where women can succeed in the workplace.

11:30 AM – Adjourn

- Motion: Rep. Rosemary Lesser
- Second: Melissa Freigang
- Motion passed unanimously

MEMBERS ATTENDING

(**bold** = in attendance, *italics* = excused)

Sen. Ann Millner
Sen. Luz Escamilla
Rep. Karianne Lisonbee
Rep. Rosemary Lesser
Kori Ann Edwards
Natalie Kaddas (Zoom)
Tina Hazlett
Karen DelPriore
Kelly Vincent (Zoom)
Heather Brace
Jennifer Christopulos
Morgan Lyon Cotti
Melissa Freigang
Concetta Defa
Mayor Debbie Winn

STAFF ATTENDING

(**bold** = in attendance, *italics* = excused)

Ryan Starks
Kori Ann Edwards
Kyle Palmer
Abby Hunsaker
Ashleigh Jensen

GUESTS ATTENDING

(**bold** = in attendance, *italics* = excused)

Amanda Goodell
Rebecca Banner
Nate McDonald
Robbi Foxxe
Todd Jenson
Paige Stevens
Aspen Hawks
Emily Carr