

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
HEALTH RESEARCH ADVISORY COMMITTEE

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IN RE: FISCAL CODE

PUBLIC MEETING

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BEFORE: MUNEEZA IQBAL, Chair (Deputy Secretary)
Dwight Davis, M.D., Member
Peter Tombros, MBA, Member
Michael Parmacek, M.D., Member
HEARING: Thursday, September 12, 2024
1:00 p.m.
LOCATION: Microsoft Teams
WITNESSES: None

Reporter: Jennifer Corb

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RODEEN LECHLEITHER, ESQUIRE

PA Department of Health

Office of Legal Counsel

Health & Welfare Building, Room 825

625 Forster Street

Harrisburg, PA 17120

OTHER SPEAKERS:

WILLIAM CRAMER

MARIANNE BOT (PHONETIC)

JOSH EISNER

MARGARET C. MCDONALD

DANIEL MYERS

PATRIC O'ROURKE

ALSO PRESENT: Barry Ciccocioppo, Pamela Brown,
Sylvia Golas, Galen Graham, Senica Kimber, Kendra
Lebo, Gina Leis, Diane Luciano, Rebecca Zelner,
Lindsey Walsh

I N D E X

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OPENING REMARKS

By Deputy Secretary Iqbal

5 - 6

DISCUSSION AMONG PARTIES

6 - 21

CERTIFICATE

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MUNEEZA IQBAL: Members of the public to this meeting of the Health Research Advisory Committee. My name is Muneeza Iqbal. I'm the Deputy Secretary for Health Resources and Services. At our last HRAC meeting on January 10th of 2022, my predecessor, Jared Shinaberry, discussed the fiscal code. As you are aware, the Governor's administration changed in January 2023 with the swearing in of Governor Josh Shapiro. Dr. Deborah Bogen was confirmed as our Secretary of Health in June of 2024. Since the Secretary's confirmation, it has been her priority to vitalize the department's committees and boards, ensuring the engagement of stakeholders as we further our department's mission of a healthy Pennsylvania for all. I appreciate all of you attending today's meeting. I'll first take attendance to make sure that we can meet quorum and then officially start the meeting.

So for attendance, we will start with the HR committee members. When I call your name, please introduce yourself by sharing your title, organization, or role that you represent. And please do correct me if I mispronounce your name. All

1 right, starting with Anantha Shekhar. I believe they
2 actually reached out to my team earlier this morning
3 and said they were not able to attend.

4 Donna Gentile O'Donnell?

5 Dwight Davis?

6 DWIGHT DAVIS: Dwight Davis, Penn
7 State College of Medicine.

8 CHAIR IQBAL: Good afternoon. Peter
9 Tombros?

10 PETER TOMBROS: Peter Tombros,
11 Director of Penn State Health.

12 CHAIR IQBAL: Welcome. Patricia
13 Vance?

14 Michael Parmacek?

15 MICHAEL PARMACEK: Michael Parmacek,
16 chair of medicine, University of Pennsylvania.

17 CHAIR IQBAL: Thank you. Karen
18 Feinstein? Michelle Masucci? Rodeen, I'm going to
19 check with you. I believe we only have three members
20 present, right?

21 RODEEN LECHLEITHER: That's what I
22 heard.

23 CHAIR IQBAL: Any other members who
24 may have joined? Committee members who may have
25 joined after I called their name, because at this

1 time they're not meeting quorum.

2 RODEEN LECHLEITHER: So there are two
3 individuals that called in. I just have phone
4 numbers listed. I'm not sure who they might be, 717-
5 514-3516 and 717-531-4656.

6 CHAIR IQBAL: Can you identify
7 yourselves, please? If you're on the phone.

8 MARIANNE BONDI: (phonetic)? I'm 514-
9 3516, I'm just a member of the public listening.

10 CHAIR IQBAL: All right. Welcome.

11 MARIANNE BONIDIE: Thank you.

12 CHAIR IQBAL: The other number we -

13 JOSH EISNER: And the other number,
14 this is Josh Eisner from Penn State Health. I'm a
15 member of the public.

16 CHAIR IQBAL: Welcome. So
17 unfortunately - Go ahead

18 MARGARET C. MCDONALD: I was just
19 going to say, Margaret McDonald, with the University
20 of Pittsburgh, but a member of the public.

21 CHAIR IQBAL: Welcome. So
22 unfortunately, we do not have quorum, so we cannot
23 continue the meeting. However, I'm happy to send an
24 email update to the committee with some of the
25 information that were going to share today. So

1 unfortunately, with that we would have to end the
2 meeting.

3 MICHAEL PARMACEK: Is it possible that
4 you could provide that verbally today and at least
5 give us an option to respond to it and also send it
6 to all the members, but not do anything official?

7 CHAIR IQBAL: Just going to check with
8 my team on that.

9 MICHAEL PARMACEK: Because it's been,
10 as you can see, it's been a couple of years since we
11 really had a meeting.

12 CHAIR IQBAL: That's true. So let's
13 do that. So let me give some of the verbal updates.
14 We won't, we won't do any of the voting, so we won't
15 be approving minutes, but I can give some updates on
16 what is going on at the Department of Health and at
17 the Commonwealth.

18 So some of the CURE non-formula
19 funding for previous years. As you are aware, the
20 fiscal codes from 2021 through 2024, which is the
21 most recent one, set the priority for CURE non-
22 formula funds which supersede at the regular
23 functions of this committee. The Department of
24 Health has been working with the legislature to
25 really try to understand their plans, future of the

1 tier funds and how we can involve the expertise of
2 the HRAC committee in the priority selection process.

3 But during this upcoming legislative
4 session, which I believe starts in a week or so, we
5 are planning to work closely with the legislature to
6 try and amend the existing fiscal code language so
7 that the committee can actually return to their
8 functions of selecting priorities for these research
9 funds. So as a first step, we wanted to set up the
10 meeting today to try and bring the committee up to
11 speed on where we have been.

12 So we aim to get back to our twice a
13 year minimum schedule for committee meetings, and
14 we're going to schedule another meeting for spring of
15 2025. At that time, the Governor's budget should
16 have been announced and we would have more clarity on
17 the administration's priorities in the budget and the
18 Governor's overall initiatives, which can give the
19 committee some direction in selecting the priorities
20 for the next budget cycle.

21 We really appreciate your valuable
22 time. It's unfortunate we don't always meet quorum,
23 which is why we try to schedule these meetings
24 according to your calendar, so we appreciate those
25 who reach back out to us and let us know what their

1 availability is. I do want to remind the current
2 committee members that the memberships have expired.

3 So we will also be working on reappointments and
4 appointments before the next meeting. Randy, if you
5 can skip over to this slide which had the
6 appointments membership is done. Thank you.

7 So for those of you who are interested
8 in a reappointment, if you could please let us know
9 via email so that we can forward it onto the
10 legislators who are responsible for the selections,
11 and you can sort of see on the screen how that works.
12 You may not remember how you were appointed, but that
13 is fine. Our team will look into that, and if you're
14 interested, we'll definitely work with the
15 legislature and the Governor to have the
16 reappointments put in.

17 All right, an update on where we are
18 with the actual grants. So the fiscal code was
19 selected. Biotechnology and pediatric cancer is the
20 CURE priorities for all four of those years. So '21
21 through '24. These grants are currently being
22 processed, and we expect them to be released to the
23 grantees by the end of this year. We have to work
24 with the legislature to try and understand and make
25 sure that the lens of the fiscal code was appropriate

1 the way were dispersing the money was appropriate to
2 what they intended in the fiscal code, and that has
3 taken some extensive time. Plus then we have change
4 in administration, a change in secretary. So there
5 has been some delays in our process, which we're not
6 proud of. So we are working to get these funds
7 released sooner rather than later. But we're also
8 working internally to amend our own processes to
9 provide future delays. And we're hoping with
10 conversations with the legislature, we will, at least
11 in the future, know what to expect and not be
12 surprised when the fiscal code comes out.

13 So those are my updates for now, and
14 we provide these over email as well to the whole
15 committee. And I'm happy to open this up to
16 committee members for any questions or comments.

17 DWIGHT DADE: So if I might. This is
18 Dwight Dade is speaking, in your update to the
19 committee. I think you may have mentioned this, but
20 it would be helpful to understand what has occurred
21 since our last meeting in early 2022 with the
22 responsibilities that this committee has had with
23 respect to what has happened during that two and a
24 half year period of time. And maybe you mentioned it
25 and I missed it, but, you know, I wasn't sure that

1 whether or not this committee had been disbanded over
2 that period of time without any communication at all
3 until I saw this notice for meeting today. So from
4 my perspective, it would be helpful to kind of
5 understand what has happened with the
6 responsibilities that we typically have had each year
7 as it relates to funding.

8 CHAIR IQBAL: Yes, understood. No,
9 the committee was not disbanded, unfortunately, when
10 the fiscal code came out and already specified a
11 priority that superseded the role of this committee.
12 So we didn't think it was necessarily fair to set up
13 time only to - there was not much to discuss,
14 unfortunately. But that is unfair to your team,
15 which is why we've been working with the legislature
16 to try and understand, is this something that's going
17 to happen year after year. So we do have some
18 meetings set up this month with Dan to try and
19 understand what happened moving forward. I should
20 have a little bit more information. I'll talk to my
21 team as well and put that in writing and send that
22 out to you folks. But the intent is not to disband
23 this committee, and you're trying to assign it to be
24 possible.

25 DWIGHT DADE: Okay. So if I could

1 just follow up. So do I understand that it is your
2 intent that the committee responsibilities will
3 return to what they have been before, or is it my
4 understanding that we don't know?

5 CHAIR IQBAL: It's our intent to bring
6 the committee's responsibilities back. We can't
7 guarantee that, unfortunately, the legislature. So,
8 Ivan, my colleague Dan Myers is on. He's our
9 Director of Legislative Affairs, and he can talk a
10 little bit more about the process. And I want to
11 acknowledge that we have a hand out, and we'll just
12 get to you in a minute, please. Dan, do you want to
13 go first?

14 DANIEL MYERS: Yes, sure. I'll just
15 do it very quickly. Our intent is to discuss with
16 the administration and with the General Assembly to
17 have to restore the functionality and the concerns
18 that were brought in some of the prior fiscal codes
19 to give this committee the ability to set the
20 research priorities. That's the intent. That's been
21 part of our discussions we've been having both with
22 the Governor's office and with some of the
23 appropriations committees, who are kind of the main
24 drivers of the legislative - of the fiscal code,
25 which actually travels along with the State budget.

1 Hopefully that helps a little bit. I mean, it gets a
2 little nuanced, but I'm happy to kind of discuss a
3 little bit about how it goes in process. If you want
4 whatever everyone wants me to do, would like me to
5 do.

6 DWIGHT DADE: Can I ask you. aker6:
7 Well, to that point that you - to that point you just
8 made, you know, it would be really important to
9 determine how this committee will operate, because in
10 the past, what we've faced with is legislative
11 decisions that pretty much eliminated our ability to
12 do much with the funds. You know, there was two - at
13 least two legislative positions that kind of stole a
14 lot of the money from the committee. And I just
15 think it's really important. I mean, it's no use
16 being on this committee if we don't know what we're
17 supposed to do.

18 DANIEL MYERS: Yes, sir, I actually
19 absolutely agree. That's part of what the Deputy
20 Secretary alluded to, the conversations that we're
21 going to be having this fall with, to start the
22 discussion on this, to kind of establish what the
23 role is going to be. Our intent is to establish - to
24 revert back to the committee's initial intent or
25 initial legislative intent. That is our intent at

1 this point. Again, I do say some of this gets
2 subject to the whim of the legislature and kind of
3 gets stuck in the budget process, potentially. But
4 that is our intent. So that is our end goal and what
5 we're working towards.

6 DWIGHT DADE: I apologize to our
7 colleague from Penn. I didn't mean to burst in
8 there, but I thought that point needed to be made
9 right away. I'm sorry.

10 MICHAEL PARMACEK: No question. As
11 having been on this committee since 1998, I actually
12 remember when it was functional. That being said, it
13 sort of degraded over time. But with that being
14 said, I have a very specific question. If I recall
15 correctly, about 80 percent of the CURE funds was non
16 was - was the formula funds and 20 percent were the
17 projects.

18 CHAIR IQBAL: Seventy (70), 30.
19 Sorry. It was 70 percent was the formula and 30
20 percent.

21 MICHAEL PARMACEK: Okay, 70/30.
22 I'll give you 70/30. In the interim, in this last
23 three year period, have that 70 percent of funds
24 still been allocated by to the institutions via the
25 non-formula mechanism or formula mechanism, or

1 formula mechanism I guess it is.

2 CHAIR IQBAL: Correct. So that's 70
3 percent. It's usually lags behind a year because of
4 the way we look at conditions from the Federal
5 government, and we are unfortunately about six months
6 behind even that. But that money has 2021 was
7 processed, 2022 is in the process, and '23 will be
8 processed this year.

9 MICHAEL PARMACEK: And just again,
10 just to follow up on that, I seem to recall, but I
11 definitely could have this wrong. But the settlement
12 was were going to get from the tobacco funds for 25
13 years, was it? Or is it longer than that? Because
14 we're coming up on 25 years.

15 CHAIR IQBAL: I believe this year was
16 the 25th year. But my understanding, because I did
17 have this conversation with our counsel a few months
18 ago, I think it's in perpetuity.

19 MICHAEL PARMACEK: Okay. That's good
20 news.

21 CHAIR IQBAL: - tobacco, so.

22 COURT REPORTER: Can I just chime in?
23 I can only take down one person speaking at a time,
24 so if we can be mindful of that, that would be
25 helpful. Thank you.

1 CHAIR IQBAL: Anything else?

2 DWIGHT DADE: So I'll just close by
3 saying we look forward to the follow up with regards
4 to the legislative role in this process. And, you
5 know, I will leave it up to you and staff to work
6 through these. And I think all of us do understand
7 the difficulties sometimes in dealing with the
8 legislature as it relates to their role and what the
9 initial responsibility was for this committee. So we
10 all look forward to that. And I'm hoping that at our
11 next meeting it will be clarified and that others on
12 the committee, and maybe you can reiterate this to
13 the other committee members who were not able to
14 attend today about the importance of us getting
15 together for this next meeting.

16 CHAIR IQBAL: Yeah. I really
17 appreciate your support. I really appreciate the
18 committee member's commitment to this work. I know
19 it's been difficult, but we appreciate that. And we
20 are going to work towards appointments and
21 reappointments next time. So I think there are four
22 committee members on now, and I'm assuming your folks
23 are still interested in reappointments. So we'll
24 make sure to reiterate that, but we will also look to
25 for other appointments, and hopefully that will kind

1 of steer some more interest and participation in this
2 group.

3 Patrick, I will put you on hold since
4 I will allow committee members to speak first, and
5 I'll definitely give you a moment to speak. Speak
6 right after. Thank you. Peter.

7 PETER TOMBROS: Yes. Would you please
8 send those appointment - appointments so that we can
9 look at how the committee is to be constructed? And
10 then that will help us decide if it's appropriate
11 that we continue or if we should step aside. Okay.

12 CHAIR IQBAL: Okay. Can you clarify
13 that? Do you mean the way it's broken down a second
14 ago?

15 PETER TOMBROS: Yes, you had it on
16 here a second ago. The Governor gets six, I believe,
17 or four.

18 CHAIR IQBAL: Yes, I'll send that out
19 as well.

20 PETER TOMBROS: Okay.

21 MICHAEL PARMACEK: And just following
22 up on that question, because we seem to be thinking
23 the same things, do we need to notify you if we want
24 to be reappointed, or will you just take it from this
25 participation that we're requesting reappointment?

1 Do we have to notify you via email separately?

2 PETER TOMBROS: You don't have to tell
3 us or me, I get it. But the others, perhaps.

4 CHAIR IQBAL: I will for the four of
5 you on the meeting today, if you want to let us know
6 right now, we'll take that in our notes and we'll
7 make note of it. For the others we'll reach out via
8 email so you.

9 DWIGHT DADE: Can count me in if we
10 still have responsibilities.

11 MICHAEL PARMACEK: Me, too.

12 DWIGHT DADE: Yeah, that's right.

13 PETER TOMBROS: Me too.

14 CHAIR IQBAL: All right. Thank you.
15 We will definitely make note of that. Patrick, thank
16 you for your patience and let you speak.

17 PATRICK O'ROURKE: Thank you. I was
18 just hoping to get some clarification regarding early
19 comments when Deputy Secretary Iqbal spoke the hope
20 for legislative movement with the upcoming
21 legislative session. Did we specifically mean the
22 fall session, like coming up imminently or the next
23 legislative cycle 25-26?

24 CHAIR IQBAL: No, the fall session
25 that's coming up later this month. We're hoping to

1 set up some time with, and maybe Dan could speak a
2 little bit more to that, who we're meeting with.
3 Conversations are around how do we make some of those
4 amendments to the fiscal code? What is the intent of
5 the legislature to do moving forward with these
6 priorities and these care funds?

7 DANIEL MYERS: Patrick, yeah, I think
8 obviously, recognizing there probably won't be a lot
9 happening in the fall, we're going to start having
10 some of our discussions. The intent is to have it
11 for next year, for the next budget, for next budget
12 cycle, to include it, to make sure it's included
13 within the fiscal code at that point in time. That
14 way, we already have meetings. We've already been
15 able to set the priorities. That's the intent. I
16 mean, obviously, we're trying to be optimistic and
17 say we think we're going to be able to do it in the
18 eight days of legislatures back in the fall, but
19 we're really looking, I mean, more prospective.

20 PATRICK O'ROURKE: Thank you.

21 CHAIR IQBAL: All right. Any other
22 comments or questions that we can answer right now?

23 PETER TOMBROS: Well, I think we
24 appreciate you giving us this quick overview, and I
25 think it'll be helpful, at least for the four of us.

1 CHAIR IQBAL: Yeah, we really
2 appreciate your time. And we'll make sure to send an
3 email update out at least by Monday, if not sooner,
4 with all this information as well.

5 PETER TOMBROS: Thank you very much.

6 CHAIR IQBAL: Thank you so much.

7 DWIGHT DADE: Thank you.

8 CHAIR IQBAL: Have a wonderful day,
9 everyone. Thank you.

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11 MEETING CONCLUDED AT 1:21 P.M.

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CERTIFICATE

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I hereby certify that the foregoing proceedings,
HRAC Public Meeting was reported by me on 09/12/2024
and that I, Jennifer Corb, read this transcript, and
that I attest that this transcript is a true and
accurate record of the proceeding.

Dated the 25th day of September, 2024

Jennifer Corb
Jennifer Corb,
Court Reporter