

Pennsylvania Department of Health  
Health Research Advisory Committee  
Keystone Building, 400 North Street, Desert Room  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

**Thursday, May 31, 2018**  
**9:00 AM to 11:00 AM**

**COMMITTEE MEMBERS:**

**In person**

- Rachel Levine, MD, Secretary of Health and Chair of the Committee, Pennsylvania Department of Health

**Via WebEx**

- Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation and Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative
- Pat Vance, retired Senator, having represented the 31<sup>st</sup> State Senatorial District
- Michael Parmacek, MD, Frank Wister Thomas Professor of Medicine; Chair, Department of Medicine and Director of the Penn Cardiovascular Institute, University of Pennsylvania School of Medicine
- Peter Tombros, MBA, Professor and Distinguished Executive in Residence, Eberly College of Science BS/MBA Program, Penn State University
- Donna Gentile O'Donnell, PhD, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Vice President of Innovation Programs and Partnerships, Thomas Jefferson University
- Michele Masucci, PhD, Vice President for Research Administration; Professor, Department of Geography and Urban Studies; Director, Information Technology and Society Research Group, Temple University

**Absent**

- Dwight Davis, MD, Professor of Medicine and Medical Director, Cardiac Rehabilitation Program, Pennsylvania State University School of Medicine
- Arthur Levine, MD, Senior Vice Chancellor for Health Sciences and Dean of the School of Medicine, University of Pittsburgh; Maggie McDonald attended at his request

**OTHERS PRESENT:**

*Department of Health (DOH) staff in attendance*

- Sarah Boateng, Executive Deputy Secretary
- Lauren S. Hughes, MD, MPH, MSc, FAAFP, Deputy Secretary for Health Innovation
- Alison Taylor, Chief Counsel, Office of the Secretary
- Keith Fickel, Esq., Senior Counsel, Office of Legal Counsel
- Penny E. Harris, M.Ed., CAC, LPC, Director, Health Research Office
- Sylvia Golas, DMD, MPH, Public Health Program Administrator, Health Research Office
- Susan Guy, Public Health Program Administrator, Health Research Office
- Chris Albright, Administrative Officer, Health Research Office

*Others in attendance*

- Mary Anne Botte, Webber Associates
- John Anthony, Pennsylvania State University
- Margaret Durkin, Bravo Group: Government Relations
- Ben Dannels, Greenlee Partners

➤ Welcome and introductions

Secretary Levine welcomed Health Research Advisory Committee (Committee) members, Department of Health staff, and members of the public to the meeting.

Secretary Levine noted the primary purpose of the meeting was to decide on the Formula and Non-formula priority(ies) for State Fiscal Year 2019-2020.

➤ Review and approval of November 30, 2017, minutes

Dr. O'Donnell moved to accept the minutes.

Peter Tombros seconded the motion.

No oppositions or abstentions.

The motion passed unanimously.

➤ Review of the CURE program, priorities, types of funding, and funding status

Secretary Levine provided an overview of the Tobacco Settlement Act explaining the allocation of research funding into Formula 70%/Non-formula 30%. Additionally, the Secretary reviewed the decision-making process used by the Committee for Non-formula priorities.

Dr. O'Donnell asked about the relevance of the securitization of the CURE funds for a better understanding of the impact. The DOH has not received further instructions since the last meeting. Secretary Levine informed the membership an email will be sent afterward with an update.

➤ Discussion of research priorities for Formula funds for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2019-2020

Secretary Levine reviewed with the members that the Committee's precedence in the past has been to recommend that the research priorities for the Formula grants remain the same as those identified in legislation as clinical, health services, and/or biomedical research. Secretary Levine called for a motion for setting priorities for SFY 2019-2020 Formula funds.

Dr. Parmacek moved that the research priorities for Formula grants remain as identified in the legislation. The Formula grant research priorities are clinical, health services, and/or biomedical research as defined by the Act.

Pat Vance seconded the motion.

No oppositions or abstentions.

The motion passed unanimously.

➤ Update on SFY 2018-19 opioid Non-formula funding priorities

Secretary Levine shared that the status of the Request for Application (RFA) for the opioid priority is in the approval process within the Department. As soon as the RFA has been approved, the description of the RFA and the link to the RFA will be posted on the Health Research Office's website. The grant period for the opioid application will start June 1, 2019.

➤ Research Priorities for Non-formula Funds for SFY 2019-2020

Secretary Levine reviewed with the members the two funding categories in Act 77 of “Clinical research and Health Services research” and “Other research.” “Other research” would include biomedical research. In the past, the two funding categories have been combined by the Committee to enhance flexibility.

Secretary Levine called for the motion to combine the two Non-formula categories: “For the purpose of priority setting, the Health Research Advisory Committee recommends combining the two Non-formula funding categories of Clinical and Health Services research and other research. At least 50 percent of the funds must be spent on Clinical research and/or Health Services research.”

- Peter Tombros* so moved.
- Dr. Masucci* seconded the motion.
- No oppositions or abstentions.
- The motion passed unanimously.

Further discussion followed: Dr. O’Donnell expressed concern with the current vendor. She stated she spoke with Gov. Wolf about an option for decreasing costs regarding the vendor for peer and performance review. She recommended use of “green houses.” Dr. Levine will travel to Philadelphia along with Dr. Hughes, to meet and discuss with Dr. O’Donnell.

Discussion continued regarding process of peer and performance review vendor selection. The current Request for Proposals is in process as the current contract ends June 30, 2018. DOH’s Legal Counsel stated the process has always been a competitive bid. Legal and Executive Office will look into options with statute requirements.

➤ Recommendation of Research Priority for Non-formula Funds for SFY 2019-2020

Secretary Levine shared the potential Non-formula funding, assuming it remains at the level of the 2017-18 at \$11,773,309, then approximately 3 applications could be funded in 2019-2020 at \$4,000,000 or less. The HRAC had three process options regarding the decision-making process of the topic, which included requesting public testimony submissions, requesting presentations or workshops, and writing white papers.

Secretary Levine opened the floor for discussion as to how the committee would like to proceed for the identification of the 2019-2020 Non-formula priority. Each member was asked for input:

Member	Decision-making process	Topic
Dr. Feinstein	White papers	Adolescent Mental health/Behavioral health
Dr. Masucci	White papers	Precision medicine

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Maggie McDonald for Dr. Levine	White papers	Cutting edge development for sensory organ disorders; prevention of neurodegeneration
Dr. O'Donnell	White papers are efficient; testimony is enlightening	Devices to application; startups and biotech
Dr. Parmacek	White papers	Innovation and optimization of electronic health records in the physician community
Mr. Tombros	White papers	Precision medicine
Ms. Vance	White papers	Mental health; school violence
Sec. Levine	White papers	Lyme disease – better testing, treatment of chronic symptoms, treatment controversy re: antibiotics, better prevention measures

*Secretary Levine* expressed her gratitude for the service of the Committee members' ideas, input, and time.

The next meeting is scheduled for Thursday, September 20, 2018. Further details will be provided at a later date. Secretary Levine invited and encouraged members to come to Harrisburg.

➤ Meeting adjournment

*Secretary Levine* called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

*Dr. O'Donnell* so moved.

*Pat Vance* seconded the motion.

No oppositions or abstentions.

The motion passed unanimously.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:00 a.m.