



Health Research Advisory Committee

Health & Welfare Building
Room 129
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

Meeting Minutes

Monday, February 11, 2019
2:00 PM to 4:00 PM

COMMITTEE MEMBERS:

In person

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

Via WebEx

- Dwight Davis, MD, Professor of Medicine and Medical Director, Cardiac Rehabilitation Program, Pennsylvania State University School of Medicine
- Karen Wolk Feinstein, PhD, President and Chief Executive Officer of the Jewish Healthcare Foundation and Pittsburgh Regional Health Initiative
- 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
- Michele Masucci, PhD, Vice President for Research; Professor, Department of Geography and Urban Studies; Director, Information Technology and Society Research Group, Temple University
- Donna Gentile O'Donnell, PhD, Special Assistant to the President and Senior Vice President of Innovation Programs and Partnerships, Thomas Jefferson University
- 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

Absent

- Pat Vance, retired PA state Senator, having represented the 31st State Senatorial District

OTHERS PRESENT:

Department of Health (DOH) staff in attendance:

- Carolyn Byrnes, Acting Executive Deputy Secretary, DOH
- Yvette Kostelac, Chief Counsel, DOH
- Keith Fickel, Esq., Office of Legal Counsel, DOH
- Lauren Hughes, Deputy Secretary for Health Innovation, DOH
- Brian Lentz, Director, Bureau of Health Planning; Acting Deputy Secretary for Health Innovation upon departure of Dr. Hughes, DOH
- Penny E. Harris, M.Ed., CAC, LPC, Director, Health Research Office
- Sylvia Golas, DMD, MPH, Public Health Program Administrator, Health Research Office
- Chris Albright, Administrative Officer, Health Research Office
- Pamela Brown, Management Technician, Health Research Office



Others in attendance:

- Mary M. Keenan, Webber Associates, Wistar Institute
- John Anthony, Pennsylvania State University
- Margaret Durkin, Bravo Group

➤ **Welcome and introductions**

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

Secretary Levine noted the primary purpose of the meeting was to review the work of the Committee and to continue the planning process to establish the health research priorities for the State Fiscal Year 2020-2021.

➤ **Review and approval of October 1, 2018, minutes**

Dr. O'Donnell moved to accept the minutes.

Dr. Parmacek seconded the motion.

No opposition 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.

Secretary Levine shared the status of the Request for Application (RFA) for the opioid priority. DOH received six submissions in response to the RFA. A second peer review panel was convened to permit the six submissions to respond to the initial peer review panels' concerns. The top three proposals were in the process of budget and funding review by the DOH Final Review Committee. No announcements had been made on the funding awards.

Clarification of the peer review process was requested by several members, particularly regarding the notification of the outcome to those that submitted proposals to the peer review panel. Those that submitted proposals were provided peer review comments in order to adjust their proposals for the second review. The two-step process for Non-formula awards was explained, which includes the ranking of the proposals by the peer review panel and the funding decisions made by the Department's Final Review Committee, which are based on the peer review panel's rankings. As this was the first occurrence of the need for a second peer review panel, *Secretary Levine* agreed to review the whole process, from the Request for Application to the awarding of funds. This is an after-action review of the process to be considered for use going forward.

➤ **Formula fund priorities for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020-2021**

Secretary Levine reviewed with the members that the Committee's past precedent has been to recommend that the research priorities for Formula grants remain as those identified in the legislation: clinical, health services, and/or biomedical research. *Secretary Levine* called for a motion for setting priorities for SFY 2020-2021 Formula funds.



Dr. Davis 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.

Dr. Parmacek seconded the motion.

No opposition or abstentions.

The motion passed unanimously.

➤ **Non-Formula fund priorities for State Fiscal Year (SFY) 2020-2021**

Secretary Levine reviewed the two funding categories in Act 77, “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 a 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 for the 2020-2021 State Fiscal Year. At least 50 percent of the funds must be spent on clinical research and/or health services research.”

Dr. O’Donnell so moved.

Dr. Davis seconded the motion.

No opposition or abstentions.

The motion passed unanimously.

➤ **Changes to the CURE program by Act 2018-126**

Secretary Levine introduced the addition of Section 903.1 to the original Tobacco Settlement Act 2001-77, as the Spinal Cord Injury Research Program. This is a peer and performance reviewed program, so it has been added as a permanent Non-formula research category. The Department had been tasked with and is establishing a Spinal Cord Research Advisory Committee (SCRAC). The SCRAC will follow the procedures identified and used by the HRAC. The SCRAC will be identifying the priorities under this program. The Department has been assigned the additional task of identifying the amount of funds, if any, beyond the \$1,000,000 minimum allocation identified in the Act.

Clarification was requested by several members regarding the status of Section 903.1. *Secretary Levine* confirmed that the Spinal Cord Injury Research Program had been signed into law by the Governor in October 2018. The membership is being developed for the SCRAC. The apportionment for this program was from the Non-formula funds. It is the Secretary of Health’s decision regarding the fund amount of \$1,000,000 or more; *Dr. Davis* noted the amount of a \$1,000,000 was less than the typical amount for the Non-formula funding. *Secretary Levine* requested thoughts from the members about the amount to be allotted to the Spinal Cord Injury Research Program. Several members shared the concern that the addition of this Section to Act 2001-77 was setting a precedent for further amendments that could narrow the work of the Committee. *Secretary Levine* acknowledged the request by the Committee to be informed of any proposed legislation that could impact Act 2001-77 apportionment, with an opportunity for an ad hoc meeting or conference call to discuss their concerns.

➤ **Planning for the Identification of the Non-formula Funds Priority for State Fiscal Year 2020-2021**

Secretary Levine reviewed the decision-making process of the Committee for the Non-formula priority that included requesting public commentary, requesting presentations or workshops, and writing white



papers. The Department planned to return to the solicitation of public commentary as part of the decision-making process for the 2020-2021 Non-formula priority. The timeline for the solicitation included an April 30, 2019 deadline for the receipt of public commentary to be followed by the Committee's response to the submissions and a meeting scheduled for the chosen presentations.

Secretary Levine requested that the next meeting be held in-person and that one meeting annually be held in-person. The Committee requested to be provided advance notice for the meeting to accommodate schedules. *Secretary Levine* encouraged an in-person meeting with a call-in option.

➤ **Meeting adjournment**

Secretary Levine acknowledged the involvement of the Committee during the discussions and summarized the Department's next steps which are as follows: reviewing the Non-formula approval and review process with a follow up email for an ad hoc Committee discussion; acknowledging the Committee's legislative concerns by informing the Department's legislative office that if any other legislation is proposed HRAC is to be informed as soon as possible; and communicating to the Governor's Office the Committee's request to speak to the Governor.

Secretary Levine called for a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Dr. O'Donnell so moved.

Dr. Masucci seconded the motion.

The meeting was adjourned at 3:08 p.m.