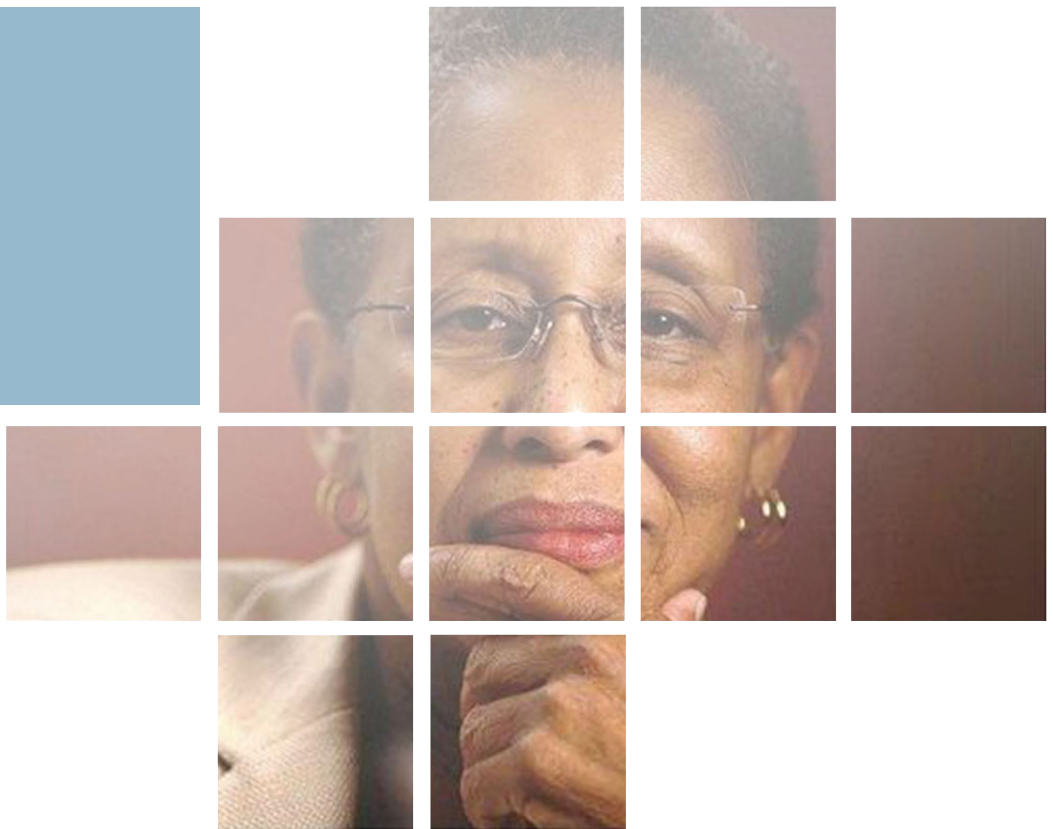

Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force

June 2022 Biannual Report





Roy Cooper
Governor

Pamela B. Cashwell
Secretary

Dear Governor Cooper,

Since my appointment as the Secretary of the North Carolina Department of Administration (DOA), it has been an honor to chair the Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force (Task Force). Working alongside the members who share a passion for equity in North Carolina, I continue to learn about this great state and the people who live here. Through their expertise, community engagement, and dedicated commitment, we have seen immeasurable progress towards a more equitable state.

The Task Force was established by Executive Order 143 to address the social, environmental, economic, educational, and health disparities in communities of color disproportionately impacted by COVID-19. Thanks to your advocacy around vaccines and the wide distribution of vaccines and testing by the Department of Health and Human Services, North Carolina is among the leading states for equitable vaccine distribution. However, as we navigate pandemic recovery, the work must continue to address the systemic disparities in North Carolina.

I look forward to working with my colleagues in other cabinet agencies to keep equity and inclusion at the forefront of everything we do on behalf of the people of North Carolina.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pamela B. Cashwell". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Pamela B. Cashwell
Secretary

Contents

June 2022 Biannual Report Executive Summary	4
Andrea Harris Task Force Members.....	5
Liaisons and Agency Staff Support List	6
Implementation Process Overview	7
Implementation Progress	8
Completed Status.....	8
In Progress Status.....	13
In Progress, Awaiting External Action Status.....	17
Not Started Status.....	19
Business Engagement Group.....	20
Lessons Learned	21
About Dr. Andrea Harris.....	22

June 2022 Biannual Report Executive Summary

The Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force was established on June 4, 2020, to create economic stability, eliminate health disparities, and achieve environmental justice in North Carolina by convening testimony, identifying best practices, and reporting findings to the Office of the Governor. The December 2020 Biannual Report was submitted to the Office of the Governor with 22 proposed policy recommendations. The June 2021 and December 2021 reports provided status updates on each of the policy recommendations. As required by Executive Order 143 (EO 143), this biannual report provides updates on the status of the Task Force and its recommendations.

In the two years since the Task Force provided its recommendations, the administration has been working with state agencies and community partners to implement the recommendations with advice and guidance from the Task Force subcommittee members. To date, progress toward implementing all 22 recommendations has begun, and fourteen recommendations are fully implemented. The remaining recommendations are either in the capable hands of various state agencies and partners to research further before they can be implemented or require legislative action.

As directed by EO 143, the Task Force sunset on June 4, 2022. However, the work of the Task Force is not complete. Recognizing the importance of furthering the legacy of Andrea Harris, the Governor's Office and the Department of Administration will extend the work of the Andrea Harris Task Force. Social, economic, environmental, and health equity remain a priority for the Governor, and state agencies will continue to address these issues on behalf of the people of North Carolina.

Andrea Harris Task Force Members

Chair: Pamela B. Cashwell, Secretary, NC Department of Administration

Access to Healthcare Subcommittee

Dr. Giselle Corbie, MD, MSc*
Dr. Catherine Harvey Sevier
Andres Henao
Rep. Donny Lambeth
Dr. Viviana Martinez-Bianchi
Dr. Carlos Rish
Dr. Christy Clayton

Enhanced Patient Engagement Subcommittee

Juvencio Rocha Peralta*
Eugene Woods
Fernando Little
Yazmín García Rico
Dr. Rhett Brown
Dr. Cedric Bright
Dr. Charlene Green
Dr. John Lumpkin

Economic Opportunities & Business Development Subcommittee

Rep. Yvonne Holley*
Stephanie McGarrah
C.C. Lamberth, Jr.
Dale Jenkins
Trey Rabon
Kevin J. Price
Adriana Chavela
Walter Baucom
Lynn Bottone

Educational Opportunity Subcommittee

Pat Martinez
Dr. Lenora Campbell
Dr. Sonyia Richardson
Margaret Weller-Stargell
Quinny Sanchez Lopez
Annette Taylor

Environmental Justice and Inclusion Subcommittee

Secretary Elizabeth Biser*
Greg Richardson
Dr. James H. Johnson Jr.
Reverend Dr. Jonathan Augustine
Reverend Dr. T. Anthony Spearman

Business Engagement Group

Justin Truesdale*

The following members are no longer on the Task Force.

Secretary Machel Sanders (Former Chair)
Secretary Mandy Cohen
Secretary Michael Regan
Secretary Dionne Delli-Gatti
Benjamin Money
Victor Armstrong
Cornell Wright

*Subcommittee chair

Liaisons and Agency Staff Support List

The following staff members from state agencies support the Task Force subcommittees in their work.

Name	Agency	Subcommittee
Michael Leach*	DHHS	Access to Healthcare
Nick J. Galvez	DHHS	Access to Healthcare
Emma Sandoe	DHHS	Access to Healthcare
Alicia Lyon*	DOA	Economic Opportunity and Business Development
Tammie Hall	DOA	Economic Opportunity and Business Development
Betty Marrow-Taylor	Commerce	Economic Opportunity and Business Development
Jenni Harris	Commerce	Economic Opportunity and Business Development
Tunya Smith	DOT	Economic Opportunity and Business Development
Regina Streaty	OSHR	Economic Opportunity and Business Development
Dr. Charrise Hollingsworth*	Governor's Office	Educational Opportunity
Judykay Jefferson	Community College System	Educational Opportunity
Jeff Sural	DIT	Educational Opportunity
Susan Forbes	DNCR	Educational Opportunity
Tracey Burns	DNCR	Educational Opportunity
Carolina Fonseca Jimenez*	DEQ	Environmental Justice and Inclusion
Brian Strong	DNCR	Environmental Justice and Inclusion
Brittany Morra	DOA	Environmental Justice and Inclusion
Yasmine Shepard*	DHHS	Patient Engagement
Michael J. Arnold	OSBM	Patient Engagement

*Serving as the primary staff liaison member for the subcommittee.

Implementation Process Overview

This June 2022 report groups all recommendations by progress and visually illustrates the progress made during the past two years. Along with the staff support from the Department of the Administration, the Task Force staff provide updates on the recommendations to determine the progress category a recommendation falls under using the following definitions:

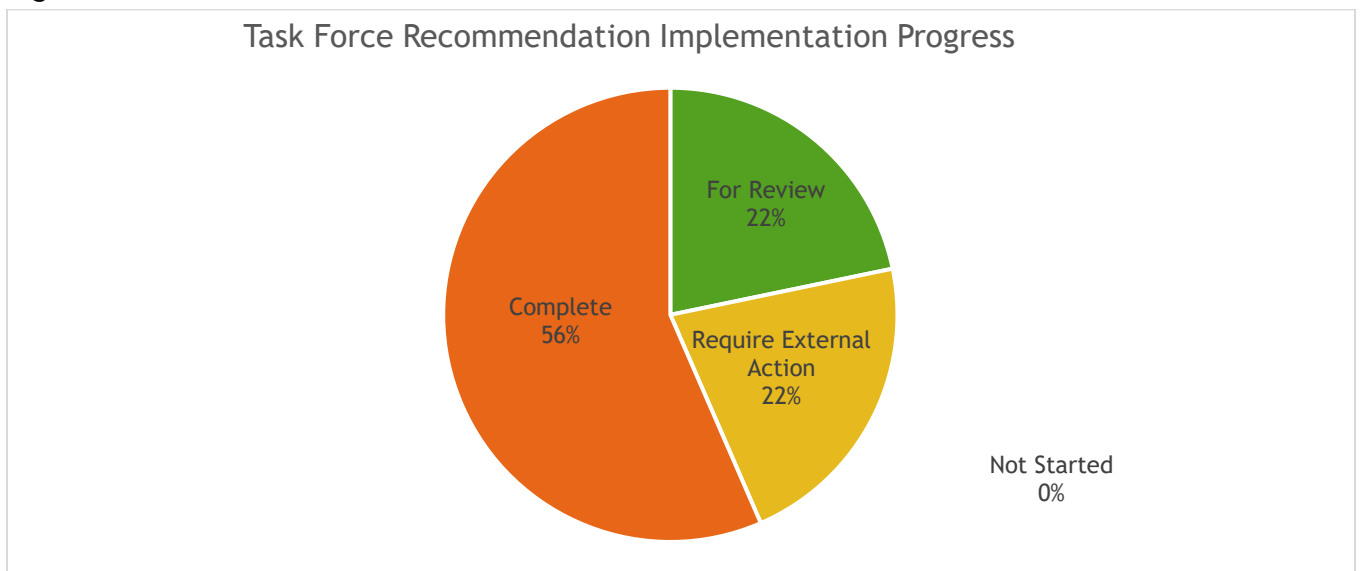
Complete - The Task Force took all available actions to implement the recommendation. Recommendations with this status are in the ownership of the appropriate state agency or other entity for long-term implementation and sustainability.

Require external action - The implementation steps needed on recommendations with this status are beyond the purview of the Task Force or DOA. Additional steps to transition these recommendations to “Completed” status require actions by another agency or an external body, i.e., the General Assembly.

For Review - The reestablished Task Force will need to review these recommendations to determine the appropriate next steps to transition to a “Complete” status.

Not started - These recommendations do not have identifiable actions associated with their implementation. Although an external entity may be working in this area, the Task Force has not started the implementation process.

Figure 1. Status of recommendations as of June 7, 2022



Implementation Progress

The remainder of this report details the status of each recommendation within each progress category, separated by the subcommittee.

Complete Status

Access to Healthcare for Underserved Communities

Recommendation: *Appropriate \$1,257,642 in state funds for the Office of Rural Health's Health Information Technology Assistance Program.*

Status: The program was awarded a two-year Centers for Disease Control (CDC) grant to assist providers with NCCARE360 implementation and electronic medical record integration. For a detailed description of the actions taken on this recommendation, review the [December 2021 Biannual Report](#).

Recommendation: *Increase investments in rural hospitals, community health centers, and federally qualified health care centers (FQHCs) to provide quality health care, digital literacy training, vaccinations, and vaccination awareness campaigns to increase the number of undocumented, low-income, and other vulnerable patients served and vaccinated.*

Status: Rural health centers and FQHCs have received substantial funding from federal COVID-19 packages. In addition to existing federal funding, the FY 2021- 2023 budget signed by Governor Cooper allocated an additional \$36 million to local health departments to expand COVID-19 mitigation efforts. The FY 2021-2023 budget also funds several initiatives to improve access to healthcare for underserved communities. Namely, the budget allocates \$94 million in American Rescue Plan dollars for funding equity and prioritizing populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19. For a detailed description of the actions taken on this recommendation, review the [December 2021 Biannual Report](#).

Recommendation: *Increase opportunities for patients to utilize telehealth services.*

Status: The FY 2021-2023 budget provides over \$1 billion in broadband investment which is critical to access telehealth options. Specifically, \$90 million in targeted grants will address local infrastructure needs to connect unserved and underserved households.

The Broadband Infrastructure Office of the NC Department of Information Technology Division of Broadband and Digital Equity continued implementing the Healthy and Connected Workforce Initiative, funded by a two-year telehealth grant from the Appalachian

Regional Commission and Dogwood Health Trust. The initiative consists of three major components:

- Development of a comprehensive telehealth technical assistance model for health care sites to address the unique needs of residents in the 20 counties in North Carolina's Appalachian region that are most affected by the coal industry.
- Pilot telehealth programs in Macon, Madison, and Mitchell counties, tailored to each area's specific economic and health needs.
- Design of a digital and health literacy program and curricula for workers enrolled in the pilot telehealth programs.

Recommendation: *Expand opportunities for people of color and historically marginalized populations to participate in state government affairs by actively seeking input from individuals with shared experiences, community leaders, advocacy groups, and interested parties in public policy decisions including, but not limited to, state plans, waivers, and policy mandates to reflect government values that support a diversity of opinions, inclusive decision making, equal language access, equitable participation, transparency, and trustworthiness.*

Status: As per Executive Order 246 issued by Governor Cooper on January 7, 2022, each Cabinet agency must develop an agency public participation plan informed by stakeholder input. These plans will include best practices for community engagement, meaningful dialogue, and efficient mechanisms to receive and incorporate public input into agency decision-making. Each Cabinet agency was required to publish its agency public participation plan on agency websites by June 1, and update the plan annually thereafter. In addition, Council of State members, higher education institutions, local governments, private businesses, and other North Carolina entities are encouraged to develop and follow their own public participation plans.

Economic Opportunities and Business Development

Recommendation: *Implement a Tier 1 and Tier 2 Subcontracting Plan: The Economic Opportunity and Business Development subcommittee recommends requiring corporations who do business with the state to commit to supporting the HUB program and its goals, including by subcontracting business to minority-owned businesses.*

Status: DOA has created standardized inclusion language for solicitations to include in the required documents for contractors to review. If signed by a contractor, the voluntary memorandum of understanding commits the company to a spending goal of 8% of their total procurement spend in North Carolina being dedicated to historically underutilized businesses. Participating corporations will report their program activities annually to the

Office of Historically Underutilized Businesses. For a detailed description of the actions taken on this recommendation, review the [December 2021 Biannual Report](#).

Recommendation: *Support apprenticeships and workforce pipelines that create job growth.*

Status: DOA hired an engagement coordinator to assist with the centralization of state apprenticeships and internships and making the availability of these opportunities known. This position will plan for a repository of available state government/agency internship opportunities, relevant information, and resources. Work will also be done to strategize with partners to determine what resources are needed to identify and hire interns who represent underserved populations with a specific focus on outreach and events targeted toward HBCUs, MSIs, and potential interns in rural NC.

Educational Opportunity

Recommendation: *Assist, advocate for, and encourage the North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, and other required administrative or academic bodies, to adopt a digital literacy curriculum and toolkit that is accessible to all students and parents in their native language.*

Status: The Educational Opportunity subcommittee assisted in securing \$650,000 in funds from the Governor's Emergency Education Relief fund to expand the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources State Library's existing digital literacy toolkit and create a new digital literacy program. Utilizing digital navigators, the State Library launched a pilot program to implement the digital literacy toolkit in three county libraries (Hoke, Iredell, Duplin) with the first pilot starting January 2022. In addition, the FY 2021-2023 budget appropriated \$25 million over two years to assist North Carolinians with digital literacy and accessing the digital economy. For a detailed description of the actions taken on this recommendation, review the [December 2021 Biannual Report](#).

Recommendation: *Advocate for the North Carolina General Assembly to pass a comprehensive budget that includes funding for HB 924, which provides for personal financial literacy for high school students, as well as a similar mandatory requirement for post-secondary institutions.*

Status: The State Board of Education adopted updated K-12 social studies standards on February 4, 2021, including the personal financial literacy course required in HB 924. Approximately \$1 million in nonrecurring funds were included in the FY21-23 budget to DPI and the NC Council on Economic Education to support the training of high school teachers poised to teach the HB 924 financial literacy course beginning in the 23-24 school year.

However, recurring funds are necessary to provide continuous training for educators beginning July 1, 2023.

Environmental Justice and Inclusion

Recommendation: *Support the creation of environmental justice, equity, and inclusion positions at the Departments of Commerce, Transportation, Natural and Cultural Resources, and the Division of Emergency Management and consider other agencies where such positions might benefit community access to state decision-making.*

Status: All identified agencies have created or expanded environmental justice and inclusion positions. The Governor's Office, DOA, the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS), and the Office of State Human Resources all created similar positions within their agencies. Additional information about these positions can be found in the [June 2021 Task Force Report](#).

Recommendation: *Support funding the efforts to remediate the environmental issues in public schools.*

Status: The FY 2021-2023 budget allocates \$150 million to DHHS to fund new programs that will remediate lead and asbestos in public schools and childcare centers. For a detailed description of the actions taken on this recommendation, review the [December 2021 Biannual Report](#).

Recommendation: *Support a legislative strategy to look at additions and changes to statutes and rules to incorporate environmental justice criteria into regulatory actions.*

Status: The Environmental Justice and Inclusion (EJI) subcommittee hosted a listening session on February 24, 2022, with community members. Members of the public were provided the opportunity to submit comments through March 17, 2022, via the public meeting, online form, email, voicemail, and mail. The EJI subcommittee recommends supporting a legislative strategy to address environmental justice and equity concerns in state statutes. Based on public input throughout the subcommittee's process, the legislative strategy should consider:

- Ways to support equitable, ethical, and inclusive decisions on funding for water, wastewater, and other infrastructure, broadband access, and investments in clean energy and clean energy workforce development;
- Supporting a study to recommend a straightforward process to analyze cumulative impacts in state decision-making to provide clear guidance to residents, agencies, and businesses;
- Providing meaningful public engagement opportunities for stakeholders;

- Reviewing the decision-making processes that impact affordable housing, health care disparities, and environmental health burdens; and
- Supporting pilot programs that combine multiple agency resources and document findings to determine their effectiveness and broader application.

The subcommittee further recommends examining the environmental justice legislation passed by other states as potential examples of how North Carolina could proceed and incorporating additional stakeholder outreach to determine the most effective actions to address issues specific to North Carolina. For example, Governor Cooper’s Executive Order 246 includes a community input provision, and the results of that process may be informative to the development of a legislative strategy for a future legislative session.

Recommendation: *Utilize existing training and incentive programs to create jobs initiatives in disadvantaged communities geared toward remediation and resiliency work on public and low-income buildings in those communities, with a specific focus on public schools within the demonstration sites of Robeson and Edgecombe Counties.*

Status: EO 246 directs the Governor’s Office, Department of Environmental Quality (DEQ), & Department of Commerce to partner with the NC Business Committee for Education, NC Community College System Office, NC DPI, UNC System, HBCUs, and other stakeholders to establish Clean Energy Youth Apprenticeship programs that prepare graduates for fulfilling and well-paying careers in NC’s clean energy economy. Furthermore, in partnership with state agencies and stakeholders, the Executive Order instructs the NC Business Committee for Education to establish Clean Energy Youth Apprenticeship programs in at least five additional learning sites, with an emphasis on educational institutions that serve underrepresented communities.

Based on the feedback provided to the subcommittee during the past two years of the Task Force, environmental justice is comprised of and interwoven with many social equity issues, like affordable housing and access to health care. As the Task Force continues to consider equity on a larger scale, environmental justice work continues at DEQ on the Secretary’s Environmental Justice and Equity Advisory Board, as well as through Executive Order 246 and across the cabinet with each of the Environmental Justice and Equity leads.

DEQ will continue to work with staff to further advance the recommendation. DEQ remains supportive of the mission of the Task Force as work continues for environmental justice.

Patient Engagement

Recommendation: *Increase funding to strengthen the capacity of federally qualified health care centers (FQHCs) to increase the number of undocumented, low-income, and other vulnerable patients served.*

Status: Rural health centers and FQHCs have received substantial funding from federal COVID-19 packages, and DHHS has made Medicaid specific payment modifications for FQHCs. In addition to the existing federal funds, the FY 2021-2023 budget allocates \$94 million in American Rescue Plan dollars for funding equity and prioritizing populations disproportionately affected by COVID-19. For a detailed description of the actions taken on this recommendation, review the [December 2021 Biannual Report](#).

For Review Status

Economic Opportunities and Business Development

Recommendation: *Create economic incentives to encourage participation with Historically Underutilized Businesses (HUB).*

Status: The Subcommittee has met with and garnered support from the Department of Commerce and the Economic Development Partnership of North Carolina to broaden incentives offered to businesses to align with the state's diversity and inclusion initiatives. Commerce has also developed the [First In Talent Economic Development Strategic Plan¹](#), which includes designation of responsibility within Commerce to help coordinate and implement policies and strategies that encourage women and minority entrepreneurship. In addition, the subcommittee advocated for tax and other business-related incentives, as well as access to additional funding for HUB initiatives. Still, legislation may be necessary for this recommendation to advance further.

Recommendation: *Offer educational support and mentorship to diverse businesses, leverage partnerships with NC Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) to develop executive education programs available to minority-owned businesses doing business in the state.*

Status: The FY 2021-2023 state budget allocates \$3 million in nonrecurring funds for creating HUB Academies. The HUB Academies will teach small subcontractors and specialty contractors the basics of operating a successful construction company that can compete for

¹ [NC Commerce: First in Talent: Strategic Economic Development Plan for the State of North Carolina](https://www.nccommerce.com/documents/first-talent-strategic-economic-development-plan-state-north-carolina) - <https://www.nccommerce.com/documents/first-talent-strategic-economic-development-plan-state-north-carolina>

state-funded projects. At least three HUB Academies will be hosted around the state by HBCUs and Community Colleges.

After reviewing the memorandum of understanding to develop a corporation and HUB businesses mentor-protégé program, the subcommittee adjusted their approach and presented a program idea to leadership at the Department of Commerce. The Department of Commerce is working with the DOA HUB Office to develop a program proposal for a mentor-protégé program to determine its feasibility and the next steps.

Educational Opportunity

Recommendation: *Support community health centers by implementing telehealth and telemedicine initiatives, including, but not limited to, ensuring adequate funding for health education, and partnering with state agencies and other groups that share similar goals of increasing broadband access and addressing health literacy.*

Status: The subcommittee reached out to DHHS and other agency partners to learn more about ongoing health literacy initiatives across the state. DHHS's Office of Rural Health presented to the Task Force at the December 2021 meeting about the identified need for health literacy in marginalized communities.

Additionally, the subcommittee researched opportunities for collaboration between community health centers located in the same communities where the ongoing digital literacy programs are underway. Partners at the Department of Natural and Cultural Resources and the State Library have recently expressed interest in incorporating health literacy aspects into the implementation and evaluation of the digital literacy project.

The FY 2021-2023 state budget invests an unprecedented \$1 billion in broadband expansion. The budget allocates some of that money for specific initiatives to improve underserved populations' education. For example, the budget provides \$4.6 million in recurring funds for the School Connectivity Initiative, bringing connectivity to all K-12 public schools in North Carolina. Another \$15 million in nonrecurring funds is allocated for improving broadband for 25 rural community colleges. Moreover, an additional \$90 million in targeted grants should address local infrastructure needs to connect unserved and underserved households.

The Office of Minority Health has received a two-year federal grant to advance health literacy in Durham, Mecklenburg, and Wake counties through local health and human services departments. This work will include developing health literacy plans to increase the availability, acceptability, and use of COVID-19 public health information. The Health Information Technology Team at the Office of Rural Health has completed several telehealth

initiatives, including a telehealth readiness assessment for healthcare centers, workshops for community health centers, and providing telehealth technical assistance. The subcommittee seeks to engage the NC Community Health Centers Association to determine the best way to support the community health centers' long-term telehealth and telemedicine initiative (e.g., sustainable funding).

This subcommittee believes partnering agencies and organizations together, whose focus areas are access to broadband and digital literacy, is a doorway to health literacy through telehealth in the future.

Recommendation: *Establish a statewide health literacy coordinating council and corresponding regional health literacy councils as consistent with the Area Health Education model.*

Status: The subcommittee has engaged NC Area Health Education Centers (AHEC) to identify areas of alignment between existing AHEC programming and the subcommittee's interest in a statewide approach to ensuring health literacy is prioritized as we enter a new phase of the pandemic. The subcommittee shifted its focus to consider statewide interest in establishing this council, in addition to potential coalition members to help shape a statewide agenda for promoting health literacy.

This recommendation will need to be reviewed by the future Task Force to determine if it continues to align with the missions of the Task Force and what next steps are necessary to move this forward.

Patient Engagement

Recommendation: *Strengthen medical school admission pipeline programs for students of color.*

Status: The subcommittee has met with multiple groups to learn more about the existing healthcare workforce and education pipelines and practices to implement this recommendation. They are focused on learning more about existing pipelines across hospital systems to potentially act as a convenor so hospital systems can exchange best practices for establishing and maintaining successful workforce pipelines from high-school onward. The committee has identified a need for additional data collection regarding the gaps in education for math and science, particularly during middle school years. This data could help identify ways to improve pipelines for students down the road. Work continues to identify stakeholders for collaboration.

The Office of Rural Health has established a comprehensive pipeline to recruit and train community health workers. The Office of Rural Health is partnering with NC Historically Black

Colleges and Universities, UNC-Pembroke, and community colleges in developing and hosting community health worker training opportunities. In addition, several private and public partners have established a sustainable pipeline for recruiting and retaining community health workers who can support individuals through the pandemic and beyond. The pipeline process includes assessment, certification, mentorship, networking, coordination, advocacy, training, professional development, and continuing education.

The subcommittee has also concluded that strengthening pipelines in healthcare for communities of color extends beyond medical school. The subcommittee found pipeline programs for medical school or any other professions will require student engagement early in their academic journey, including as soon as middle school. Progression on this recommendation will require expertise and insight from professionals within academia and an assessment of established programs.

Requires External Action Status

Access to Healthcare for Underserved Communities and Patient Engagement

Recommendation: *Expand Medicaid.*

Status: North Carolina is closer than ever to agreement on Medicaid expansion. Leadership in both chambers of the North Carolina General Assembly now support expansion, and active negotiations are underway. Governor Cooper remains committed to full Medicaid expansion in North Carolina.

Patient Engagement

Recommendation: *Establish mandatory, uniform cultural methods of collecting demographic patient information, including race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, etc., across all health care systems.*

Status: The Task Force and DHHS brainstormed to refine demographic capturing best practices and consider educational materials for health care systems on these best practices. DHHS's vaccination administration/testing programs focus on equity by collecting specific clinical, administrative, and data collection requirements. There has been a push to look over contracts and add in language for better self-reporting and data collection within DHHS and vendors. Research continues in DHHS and the subcommittee for examples of equitable data collection systems that would include more categories around race, ethnicity, gender identity, and sexual orientation. There has also been some movement within the department for Indigenous populations to be able to self-identify their tribal affiliation when seeking COVID-related services. Conversations with health systems across the state to see how this data is currently being collected will need to begin to see how these systems could be expanded upon. The reestablished Task Force will continue to investigate this recommendation and determine next steps.

Recommendation: *Ensure and strengthen medical sick leave policies for essential workers, particularly those of historically marginalized backgrounds.*

Status: The second annual Paid Parental Leave (PPL) [report](#) is published on OSHR's website. The FY21-22 report will be available after September 1, 2022. OSHR will continue to market paid parental leave proactively as a recruitment and retention tool that helps to make state government careers more competitive with private sector opportunities. Continuing to work closely with participating agencies, OSHR is working to ensure that employees are aware of

PPL's availability and can support as needed in submitting a request and accurately recording time.² The subcommittee will review the FY 21-22 report findings after release to identify areas to advocate for expansion. The subcommittee will explore the best next steps and revisit this recommendation in the next iteration of the Task Force.

² Office of State Human Resources 2021 Paid Parental Leave Report
<https://oshr.nc.gov/oshr-paid-parental-leave-report-9121-1pdf/open>

Not Started Status

The implementation process has begun for all 22 of the Task Force's Recommendations.

Business Engagement Group

In partnership with the Andrea Harris Task Force's Business Engagement Group, DOA hosted a three-part panel discussion series for business leaders to share their diversity, equity, and inclusion practices.

The Business Engagement Group recommended virtual lunch-and-learn sessions for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) to connect businesses and public entities to discuss DE&I practices and programs. Each session included representatives from various NC companies who have adopted DE&I programs that have thrived and had positive outcomes to share their successes and challenges. All three of the planned lunch-and-learn sessions have occurred, with over 75 attendees across the state ranging from DE&I professionals, government employees, and private sector representatives.

The first DE&I lunch-and-learn hosted on April 22, 2022, discussed External Mentor Programs & Supplier Diversity Programs. Kevin J. Price, President & CEO of The Institute and Task Force member, moderated the panel. The panelists included Kate Weaver, Supplier Diversity Manager, Peapod Digital Labs (Food Lion sister company), and Andrew Grier, Supplier Engagement & Diversity Manager, Duke Energy.

The second DE&I lunch-and-learn on May 20, 2022, discussed Diversity Training and Employee Business Resource Groups. Evin L. Grant, Policy Director, NC Department of Administration, moderated the panel. The panelists included Niya Fonville, Director of Externships, Campbell Law School, and Danielle Pavliv, Chief Diversity Officer, SAS.

The third and final installment of the DE&I lunch-and-learn series on June 17, 2022, discussed Diversity Recruiting and Hiring and On the Job Training with an added focus on neurodivergent and formerly incarcerated persons. Tunya Smith, Director of the NC Department of Transportation Office of Civil Rights, moderated the panel. The panelists included Shae Albrecht, Manager, DEI Strategic Recruitment Partners at Red Hat, Wesley Jackson Wade, Owner of Forward Counseling & Consulting, and Dr. Craig Waleed, Project Manager, Unlock the Box (UTB) Campaign Against Solitary Confinement.

Lessons Learned

Though fourteen of the Task Force recommendations have been completed, there is still work to be done. Advancing equity is a practice that must be continually incorporated into work across the state.

The importance of collaboration and intersectionality became a priority within the five subcommittees during the life of the Task Force. Policy issues that may seem to touch different areas often overlap with similar equity issues and gaps. Subcommittees were able to find common themes to come together and push for all recommendations to move forward. The shared larger vision remains the main goal, and the subcommittees will continue to network with each other beyond this iteration of the Task Force.

The Task Force members, in their individual capacity, continue to advocate for recommendations not yet completed. In the next iteration of the Task Force, work will continue to find new ways to advocate for and advance these recommendations across the state. Continued advocacy for resources and funding for these recommendations and programs is necessary for sustainability.

The Task Force members represent a large and diverse group of leaders in their fields and backgrounds. The work of the Task Force could not be done without the work of these members who have pushed and advocated for equity not just in this sphere but in all spheres of life. They remain committed to the mission and will continue this work across North Carolina even outside of the Task Force. Thank you to all who continue to push forward the dreams of Andrea Harris.

About Dr. Andrea Harris

"We need to make sure we always have people at the table who are most affected."

–Andrea Harris (2019)



The Andrea Harris Social, Economic, Environmental, and Health Equity Task Force is named in honor of the late Andrea Harris. A native North Carolinian, Andrea Harris was a trailblazer for minority businesses and communities. Harris graduated from Bennett College and became one of the youngest community agency directors in the nation, helping fight poverty across three rural North Carolina communities. With an unwavering passion for helping others in need, she co-founded the NC Institute of Minority Economic Development in 1986, where she served as president in 1990. Located in the heart of Durham, the Institute supports minority and women-owned businesses. Harris was named the Lifetime Achievement Winner in Triangle Business Journal's Leaders in Diversity Awards in 2014 and retired from the Institute that same year. After retiring from the Institute, Harris continued to serve on several boards, including the State's Advisory Council for Historically Underutilized Businesses, where she was appointed in 2017. She is a recipient of numerous awards and honors, including the Order of the Long Leaf Pine, the highest award for state service granted by the Office of the Governor, as well as an honorary doctorate from her alma mater, Bennett College.

END OF REPORT