

State of Connecticut
GENERAL ASSEMBLY



PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE
LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BUILDING HARTFORD,
CT 06106-1591

NASH Working Group

Meeting Summary

Wednesday, September 25, 2024

11:30 AM on Zoom and YouTube Live

I. Convene Meeting

- The meeting was convened by Rep. McCarthy-Vahey at 11:32 PM.
- Attendance: Rep. Cristin McCarthy-Vahey, Sen. Saud Anwar, Dr. Wajahat Mehal, Ivelisse Alvarado, Dr. Jorge Moreno, Denise Dawson, Dr. Bubu Banini, Dr. Elizabeth Richardson, Alison Giguere, Andy Beltran, Dr. Xuehong Zhong, Barabara Cass, and Alessia Ricks-Harris

II. Introduction of Members

- Members of the Working Group introduced themselves.

III. Designation of Co-Chairs

- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey asked Dr. Wajahat Mehal to become a co-chair of the group.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal commented to what he brings when dealing with NASH and is thankful for being asked to become a co-chair.

- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey asked the group if other members wanted to become a co-chair of the Working Group.
- Dr. Bubu Banini said that she would be happy to become a co-chair and thanked her patients for being on the Working Group.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey thanked Dr. Wajahat Mehal and Dr. Bubu Banini for their public service.

IV. Working Group Scope of Work

- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey read the Working Group Scope of Work.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal commented on the Scope of Work and added that it is comprehensive, and he wouldn't want to expand the scope. He also commented on the report that the Working Group will produce.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey commented on the report and the date that the Working Group will end. She stated that it is okay if the Working Group needs a little bit more time as the scope is comprehensive.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal thanked Rep. McCarthy-Vahey for her answer and suggested that the Working Group goes through the list.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey explained that today is an organizational meeting to deal mainly with logistics of the Working Group.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal asked about the life cycle of a report after it is submitted to the Legislature.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey answered that these reports are valuable, and it is up to the Legislature to decide what to do with it. She pointed out that the report and meeting information will be posted on the Public Health Committee website and will be accessible to the public.
- Sen. Anwar agrees with Rep. McCarthy-Vahey and added that the report is meant for legislators to look at. The members of the Working Group are subject matter experts, and that their recommendations should lead legislators to agree with the conclusion in the report.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal thanked the Public Health Committee Chairs for their answers.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey noted that the Working Group has one vacancy that can be filled with the qualification of "*a person in the state living with nonalcoholic fatty liver disease*".

V. Meeting Schedule

- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey suggested that future meetings be held over ZOOM. She also suggested that the next meeting can be at the same time two weeks from this meeting.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal agreed with Rep. McCarthy-Vahey's suggestions.
- Dr. Bubu Banini agreed that biweekly meetings will work for her as well and stated that members could recommend changes at the next meeting.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey asked the administrative staff if the time will work for the next meeting and the administrative staff had no issues.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal asked members of the Working Group if this meeting schedule could work for them.
- Dr. Xuehong Zhang stated that he will not be able to make the October 9th meeting.
- Dr. Bubu Banini asked if the Working Group meetings could start later Wednesdays due to a conflict.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey stated that it is most important for co-chairs to be able to attend the meetings.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal suggested 4pm on Wednesdays.
- Dr. Bubu Banini suggested moving the meeting to 12:30pm.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal agreed with that time.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey stated that not all Working Group members will be able to attend all the meetings and that the meetings will be recorded, and summaries of the meetings will be available. She also summarized the meeting schedule conversation.

VI. Announcement of Time and Date of Next Meeting

- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey announced that the next meeting will be on October 9th at 12:30 PM on ZOOM.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal suggested that the group discuss the disease before they adjourn as the members of the Working Group deal with the disease from different perspectives.

- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey agreed with that idea and stated that the conversation will help educate and inform individuals about this disease.
- Some members provided their perspective with dealing with the disease.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey commented that the Legislature mandated insurance coverage of cardiac calcium scores. She added that part of the struggle is that the issues are so interconnected.
- Andy Beltran asked what the likelihood of testing patients is genetically and the feasibility of genetically testing all patients.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal answered that it is feasible, but it is not recommended.
- Dr. Bubu Banini answered that there are still a lot of barriers to getting patients genetically tested.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal answered that other options are more viable and easier.
- Denise Dawson provided her perspective with dealing with the disease and suggested screening for mental and behavioral health as it could help in intervention.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal agreed with Denise Dawson and expressed his belief that eating disorders are underdiagnosed. He asked about the recommendations and how practical do they have to be.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey thanked Denise Dawson for her comments and added that these types of conversation are typically done in an undertone of judgement and thanked the Working Group for the conversation. In response to Dr. Wajahat Mehal's question, she stated that the Working Group is meant to educate and inform the public. The Working Group Scope of Work is comprehensive, and it is up to the Working Group to decide if the recommendations will be practical or idealistic.
- Dr. Wajahat Mehal commented on how the disease already has national guidelines and asked how the recommendations of the Working Group will work with those national guidelines.
- Rep. McCarthy-Vahey answered that the Public Health Co-Chairs are interested in evidence based best practices and suggested that those guidelines are a great place to start the conversation.

VII. Adjournment

- The meeting adjourned at 12:26 PM