



STATE OF MICHIGAN  
 JOCELYN BENSON, SECRETARY OF STATE  
 DEPARTMENT OF STATE  
 LANSING

**Task force on Women in Sports  
 Meeting Minutes**

Virtual Meeting via Zoom Webinar because of Covid-19 pandemic,  
 pursuant to 2020 PA 228 (MCL 15.263)

**Thursday, December 3, 2020  
 9:00 AM – 11:40AM**

This meeting of the Task Force on Women in Sports was officially called to order by  
 Chairperson/Secretary Benson at 9:06 a.m.

**Task Force Attendees**

	<b>Present</b>	<b>Absent</b>
Chairperson/Secretary Benson	X	
Penny Allen-Cook	X	
Ketra Armstrong	X	
Kathy Beauregard	X	
Keri Becker	X	
Lorin Cartwright	X	
Carolyn Cassin	X	
Ramona Cox	X	
Cali Crawford	X	
Joanne Gerstner	X	
Jennifer Granger		X
Mike Guswiler	X	
Carol Hutchins	X	
Samantha Mullet	X	
Erika Swilley	X	

Task Force Advisory Members attending included: Dr. Deborah Antoine, Neena Chaudhry, Dr. Dan Gould, Dr. Richard Lapchick, Heather Lyke, Suzy Merchant, Heather Mitts Feeley, Patti Phillips, Scott Pioli, Meg Seng, Mark Uyl, Malia Xie (Wilson Foundation).

**Welcome, Introductions, Updates**

Chairperson/Secretary Benson welcomed everyone to the virtual Task Force meeting and provided the following new updates:

- Washington Football Team Coach Jennifer King will be participating in My Cause My Cleats on Monday night football. The cleats will be auctioned off with proceeds going to the Women Sports Foundation Scott Pioli Family Fund, which provides financial support for women's football coaches and scouts.
- The Task Force, in partnership Michigan Women Forward, received a generous grant from the Ralph C. Wilson Jr. Foundation. The Task Force is also working with Michigan Women Forward to look for additional sources of funding

### **Chair's Report**

Chairperson/Secretary Benson provided an overview on the considerable progress made towards the goals of this task force, and moving into the next phase of work:

- Survey results were completed and analyzed in a report now available on our website.
- Qualitative research interviews were completed and analyzed.
- A research report was compiled by Department of State staff to summarize and present the work of all research contributors on the landscape of women and girls in sports in Michigan.

Chairperson/Secretary Benson also provided an update on the timeline and next steps for the work ahead:

- Brainstorm over the next six months to identify potential solutions/recommendations to the problems identified from the research.
- Meet in early June 2021 to talk through and solidify those recommendations to make to the Governor.
- Once solutions identified, spend the second half of 2021 writing up details on recommendations.
- Release final report in 2022 – the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Title IV.

### **Public Comment**

Jenna Schroeder, basketball referee for the NBA, addressed the Task Force about the lack of female referees and lack of awareness about this opportunity for women. Schroeder hope to work with the Task Force to incorporate promoting female referees in sports.

### **Research Report Discussion**

Ketra Armstrong thanked everyone for the team effort in circulating the survey and provided an update on the survey results.

- Obtained a healthy sample - 566 survey results from both men and women.
  - 55% female respondents/45% male.
- Responses included leaders in every sector of sports - the majority were coaches at the NCAA level, but also included officials, media, and entrepreneurs.
- Key take-away is that the culture of sport leadership in Michigan is gendered in a way that has adverse implications for women's opportunities and their experiences.

Armstrong noted that the overall research report for the task force includes a wealth of information:

- Qualitative data and quantitative data.
- Primary data, collected from our own stakeholders in Michigan and secondary data collected by other entities.
- Local, state and regional data, as well as national data from the Women's Sports Foundation and other scholars from throughout the country.

Secretary Benson provided a brief PowerPoint overview of the research report to kick off our discussion of the research. A copy of this PowerPoint presentation is available on the [Michigan Task Force on Women in Sports website](#).

## **Group Discussion on Key Findings and Potential Solutions**

### **Sports Leadership Discussion**

- Examine best practices in other states.
  - For example, the success of the Rooney Rule in states/organizations that have implemented.
  - Identify states with higher rates of female sports participation in youth and college levels. Generate policies/recommendations based on other state successes.
- There are possibilities for change now more than ever before with increased societal focus on race and gender issues.
- Outreach to sports leadership, athletic conferences and associations would be useful to have conversations on improving hiring practices.
  - Need to improve the talent search process and open up hiring process to larger pools of talent.
  - Explore how to “influence the influencers.” Real change happens from the top-down. Need to work with sports leaders, owners, coaches, ADs and presidents.
- Further explore work-life balance and keeping women in sports leadership. Survey showed women are leaving due to childcare, daycare, etc. Conversations about work life balance are needed for the opportunity to grow professionally.

### **Youth Sports Discussion**

- Examine methods for more robust data collection
  - Race/gender barriers combined should be more thoroughly examined.
  - Possibly create a statewide survey through MHSAA (6-12) in Michigan schools and assess students directly.
  - Survey could become a regular fixture for data collection moving forward.
  - Examine ways to collect non-school sports data (i.e. explore Great Sports Great Kids in Grand Rapids model).
- Examine policies about K-12 P.E. to increase exposure and get younger girls playing sports earlier.
- Improve education for students, parents and school staff on benefits for females playing sports – better grades, better jobs, better future.

- Examine structures that already exists and how to improve and/or implement statewide.
  - Use recess for more sports exposure
  - Run or encourage youth sports camps.
    - Get coaches, college/pro-level involved to work with k-12 at the camps
    - Offer grants for young people to attend paid youth sports camps.
    - Need new models – possibly partner with WSF.
- Create incentives for playing in sports.
  - Statewide physical fitness awards at elementary level (like prior President’s Fitness Awards).
  - Examine possible monetary incentives/prizes/drawings.

### **College and University Discussion**

- CMU hired a new female AD.
- Examine changing experience requirements for positions.
- Address internalized sexism among women and female athletes.
- Create marketing plan to increase exposure to women in sports
  - Increase media coverage to create role models/share experiences.
  - Involve every single female athletic in sports, referees, coaches.
  - Share educational things about benefits of playing sports, how affects grades, confidence, good jobs after college.

### **Professional Sports Discussion**

- Bring professional sports team to Michigan
  - WNBA team to Michigan
  - Women’s soccer team
- Create more professional sports leadership positions for women.
  - NBA level has a program for athletes for WNBA. Pistons looking to create in Michigan, giving women internships and pipelines so when jobs come up, they have experience. A lot of professionals in that program have been placed in both coaching and admin jobs.
  - Getting owners on board is important for real change.
- Encourage coaches and ADs need to tell referee assigners to put women in the game.
  - Referee assigners listen to the coaches – they have a lot of influence.
- Increase pool of talent through semi-pro opportunities.
  - Many women play semi-pro sports after college and become high school coaches and officiants – this is a pool of women who have experience to fill sports leadership roles.
- Increase media coverage of professional and semi-pro women’s sports

## **Future Meetings**

The next meeting will be held in the spring to continue this discussion on recommendations.

Once recommendations are clarified, the Task Force hopes to meet in person in Summer 2021 for a full day/annual collaboration to finalize recommendations, put them to a vote and discuss implementation.

The Task Force will finalize the report in 2022.

## **Approval of Past Meeting Minutes and Report**

Chairperson/Secretary Benson called for a motion to approve past meeting minutes. **Motion by Joanne Gerstner. Supported by Penny Allen-Cook. Chairperson/Secretary Benson asked for vote by show of hands. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.**

Chairperson/Secretary Benson asked for a motion to approve the Task Force report. **Motion by Mike Guswiler. Supported by Joanne Gerstner. Chairperson/Secretary Benson asked for a vote by show of hands. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.**

Chairperson/Secretary Benson called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. **Motion by Mike Guswiler. Supported by Joanne Gerstner. Chairperson/Secretary Benson asked for a vote by show of hands. MOTION UNANIMOUSLY APPROVED.**

Chairperson/Secretary Benson thanked everyone for their wealth of knowledge and participation and closed the meeting at 11:40 a.m.

**Meeting adjourned.**