



State of New Jersey

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Governor

NEW JERSEY MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH INNOVATION AUTHORITY
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Lisa A. Asare
President & CEO

NEW JERSEY MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH INNOVATION AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting September 24, 2025

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (NJMIHIA) held on Wednesday, September 24, 2025, at 10:00 AM Daylight Savings Time.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD IN ATTENDANCE

Ex-officio Members

Thalia Sirjue, representing Acting Commissioner of Health

Tara Colton, representing CEO of NJEDA

Sarah Adelman, Commissioner of Human Services

Justin Zimmerman, Commissioner of Banking and Insurance

Christine Norbut Beyer, Commissioner of Children and Families

Holly Low, representing Commissioner of Labor

Public Members

Andrea Martinez-Mejia ¹

Shakira Abdul-Ali

Maritza Raimundi-Petroski

Dr. Philip Bonaparte

Rosalee Boyer

¹ Andrea Martinez-Mejia missed the roll call but joined the meeting prior to the consideration of matters requiring action.

ADDITIONAL ATTENDEES

Lisa Asare, President & CEO, New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority
Michael Eleneski, Associate Counsel, Office of the Governor, Authorities Unit
Roza Dabaghyan, Deputy Attorney General, Department of Law and Public Safety, Division of Law

Eric Carlsson, Chief Financial Officer, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority
Laura Wilton, Chief of Corporate Governance, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority

Mahako Etta, Chief of Innovation, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority
Pamela Taylor, MCQC Program Manager, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority
Sofia Bonsignore, Governor's Fellow, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority
NJMIHIA Staff

President & CEO Asare called the meeting to order and announced that the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (NJMIHIA) was in compliance with the provisions of Open Public Meetings Act and that adequate notice of the meeting had been provided in the manner prescribed by law.

President & CEO Asare took roll call and welcomed representatives from the First Lady's Office, Governor's Authorities Unit, the Office of the Attorney General, and the Department of Treasury.

Holly Low, Governor Representative, nominated Thalia Sirjue, Acting Vice Chair to lead the Meeting in place of Vice Chair, Jeff Brown. A motion was made by Public Member, Shakira Abdul-Ali, and was seconded by Public Member, Maritza Raimundi-Petroski. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Acting Vice Chair Thalia Sirjue presided over the meeting with Cindy Cortez, NJMIHIA Administrative Assistant, keeping the minutes.

Chair update

Acting Vice Chair Sirjue addressed the Board and provided an update on NJMIHIA's most recent milestone, the groundbreaking of the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center (MIHIC). The MIHIC will serve as a collaborative hub to drive innovation, build a skilled and diverse maternal health workforce, and advance community-based solutions to address maternal and infant health disparities.

Acting Vice Chair Sirjue informed the Board that the next Maternal Care Quality Collaborative (MCQC) meeting will be on Friday, November 21, 2025. She noted that today's agenda included updates from the most recent MCQC meeting and related recommendations for the NJMIHIA Board.

President & CEO Statement

President & CEO Asare updated the Board on NJMIHIA's response to recent federal statements regarding vaccinations and medications during pregnancy, postpartum, and infancy. On September 19, 2025, NJMIHIA convened a subset of clinicians from the MCQC Clinical Best Practices Workgroup to review evidence-based guidance to protect the health of pregnant and lactating patients, their infants, and families.

The Murphy Administration, in conjunction with NJMIHIA and NJDOH issued a [press release](#) on September 23, 2025, outlining its position:

- Recommend HepB vaccination for pregnant patients and newborns (American Academy of Pediatrics [AAP], American College of Gynecologists [ACOG]).
- Recommend COVID-19 vaccination for pregnant/breastfeeding patients and all children 6+ months (AAP, ACOG, Society for Maternal Fetal Medicine [SMFM]).
- Support use of acetaminophen for fever/pain in pregnancy (ACOG, SMFM).
- No evidence linking prenatal acetaminophen use to autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, or intellectual disability; untreated fever/pain pose greater risks.
- COVID-19 vaccination available to all New Jerseyans ages 6 months and older, based on actions taken by the Murphy Administration earlier this month to ensure vaccinations are available without a prescription and to promote insurance coverage.
- Hepatitis B vaccination continues to be offered universally at birth.
- Acetaminophen remains available over the counter.

Next, President & CEO Asare welcomed NJMIHIA's newest team member, Mahako Etta, Chief of Innovation. Mahako offered brief remarks, expressing enthusiasm for joining the team and eagerness to collaborate with the Board on advancing NJMIHIA's innovation initiatives and agenda.

President & CEO Asare also acknowledged the transition of Pamela Taylor from Senior Advisor to MCQC Program Manager. President & CEO Asare indicated that NJMIHIA continues to expand its team in alignment with its enabling legislation that focuses on including individuals with lived experience and is committed to increasing the perinatal workforce. Next, President & CEO Asare welcomed a dynamic team of six experienced doulas to support the implementation of the NJMIHIA community-based doula pilot training program and to implement the doula rubric assessment tool, on behalf of NJMIHIA.

President & CEO Asare updated the Board on NJMIHIA's strategic planning process, facilitated by the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS). To date, CHCS has:

- Hosted focus group sessions with the NJMIHIA and MCQC Boards, and community members at the NJ Health Care Quality Institute September convening.

- Received 58 survey responses and conducted 15 interviews with community doulas, state agency staff, community members, fathers, health care providers, and other experts.
- Facilitated first strategic planning workgroup session, Organizational Self-Assessment, with NJMIHIA staff.

President & CEO Asare mentioned that the second strategic planning session with NJMIHIA staff and partners was scheduled for later the same day to review key findings from staff and external stakeholders statewide.

President & CEO Asare also updated the Board on NJMIHIA's external events. Staff participated in a variety of events such as: Scitech Scity Healthcare Innovation Engine roundtable, the McKinsey Black Economic Forum, the National Academy for State Health Policy Annual Conference, and the New Jersey Primary Care Association's Healthcare Heroes Luncheon.

President & CEO Asare welcomed NJMIHIA Governor's Fellow, Sofia Bonsignore, who provided updates on the Doula Initiatives. Sofia announced the launch of NJMIHIA's community-based doula training program on September 29, 2025 and mentioned that twenty-six applications have been received.

MCQC Program Manager, Pamela Taylor, provided updates on the Doula Rubric Assessment Tool and the Community Health Worker's pilot. Pamela also shared that NJMIHIA has provided letters of support and intent to the NJ Office of Innovation, Rutgers IFF, and Rutgers SPH to support various maternal and infant health strategies in the State.

Pamela also presented the MCQC Working Groups' final recommendations, such as:

Clinical Best Practices: Continue or expand access for the Perinatal Mental Health First Aid program, which is geared towards clinical and non-clinical professionals.

Innovation: Provide capacity-building training for community-based organizations on partnerships and grant preparedness.

Perinatal Workforce: Expand Medicaid's training approval list to include additional doula training organizations.

Emerging Issues: Identify key patient education components and employ technology-based solutions to improve patient decision-making.

Health-Related Social Needs: Develop a community engagement toolkit, including an operational checklist, guidance on ensuring diverse representation and equal contribution, and recommendation for appropriate compensation structures.

President & CEO Lisa Asare opened the floor for questions.

Community member, Karen E. Barnett, asked how the newly created training would affect individuals previously trained by HealthConnect One. Pamela clarified that it would not have impact—those trained through an approved course may continue serving families. Karen also asked how the community was informed about the training. Pamela explained that, in partnership with NJDOH and NJDHS, NJMIHIA promoted the opportunity through listservs, training contacts, social media, webinars, and the NJMIHIA and MCQC Boards.

Public Member Shakira Abdul-Ali inquired about incorporating Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) into Doula and CHW trainings. President & CEO Asare noted the importance of ACEs and highlighted the inclusion of trauma-informed care and mental health first aid in the Doula Curriculum. President & CEO Asare also highlighted the Department of Children and Families' (DCF) work on ACEs. Commissioner Norbut Beyer added that families face added stressors in the current political climate and announced DCF's new Office of Resilience "Foundations Training" on trauma, ACEs, and self-regulation, which is free and available to the public. A Training of Trainers program also launched this week to expand access.

Public Member Andrea Martinez-Mejia inquired about offering NJMIHIA doula training in multiple languages. President & CEO Asare confirmed the goal of training cohorts that reflect New Jersey's cultural and linguistic diversity. MCQC Program Manager Pamela Taylor noted the training is currently piloted in English, with plans to expand to multilingual cohorts and a Training of Trainers program. Public Member Maritza Raimundi-Petroski emphasized involving identified professionals statewide as guest speakers and suggested creating a roster of multicultural subject-matter experts, potentially highlighted in the MIHIC.

Matters Requiring Board Action

a. Approval of Minutes of June 25, 2025.

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of June 25, 2025, by Public Member, Andrea Martinez-Mejia, and was seconded by Public Member, Rosalee Boyer. Commissioner Christine Norbut Beyer abstained. Remaining members voted in favor. The motion carried.

b. Approval of Resolution to Approve MOU between NJMIHIA and NJ Division of Labor and Workforce Development

A motion was made to approve the MOU by Public Member, Dr. Philip Bonaparte, and was seconded by Public Member, Shakira Abdul-Ali. Governor Representative Holly Low recused. Remaining members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

Other Business

Dr. Philip Bonaparte inquired if NJMIHIA staff or structure could be impacted as it is an election year. President & CEO Lisa Asare responded that because NJMIHIA is established by statute and we consider our work a nonpartisan issue, the work to support healthy mothers and infants will continue. NJMIHIA is currently working hard on the strategic plan to provide a roadmap for the years ahead.

Dr. Bonaparte commended the NJMIHIA President and team for meeting on such a short time to provide the State with direction on the recommendations made by the Federal government regarding acetaminophen and vaccinations. Dr. Bonaparte requested information on how providers can be more involved in distributing science-backed information. President & CEO Asare thanked Dr. Bonaparte and highlighted the work of the MCQC Clinical Best Practices Work Group. President & CEO Asare responded that NJMIHIA will continue to provide information and engage Board members, as well as the 22 State agency partners.

Adjournment

Acting Vice Chair Thalia Sirjue requested a motion to adjourn. Public Member, Andrea Martinez-Mejia made the motion to adjourn. Public Member, Dr. Philip Bonaparte, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

I hereby certify this to be a true and original copy of the September 24, 2025, New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority Board meeting minutes.



Lisa Asare,
President and CEO