



State of New Jersey

MIKIE SHERRILL
Governor

NEW JERSEY MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH INNOVATION AUTHORITY
P. O. Box 101
TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08608-0101

Lisa A. Asare
President & CEO

DR. DALE G. CALDWELL
Lt. Governor

NEW JERSEY MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH INNOVATION AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting March 25, 2026

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (NJMIHIA) held on Wednesday, March 25, 2026, at 10:00 AM Daylight Savings Time.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD IN ATTENDANCE

Ex-officio Members

Dr. Raynard Washington, Commissioner of Health

Tara Colton, representing CEO of NJEDA

Dr. Stephen Cha, Commissioner of Department of Human Services

Vineeta Kapahi, representing Commissioner of Human Services, for the voting portion of this meeting

Trish Wallace, representing Commissioner of Banking and Insurance

Lenore Scott, representing Commissioner of Children and Families

Angela Bethea, representing Secretary of Higher Education

Holly Low, representing Commissioner of Labor

Public Members

Barbara George-Johnson

Shakira Abdul-Ali ¹

Dr. Damali Campbell-Oparaji

Andrea Martinez-Mejia

Maritza Raimundi-Petroski

¹ Shakira Abdul-Ali 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
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

Catherine Terrero, Executive Assistant, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority

Cindy Cortez, Administrative Assistant, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority

Pamela Taylor, MCQC Program Manager, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority

Gabrielle Louis, Doula Program Management Officer, 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 (MIHIA) was in compliance with the provisions of the Senator Byron M. Baer 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 Governor's Authorities Unit, and the Office of the Attorney General.

Chair Barbara George Johnson presided over the meeting with Cindy Cortez keeping the minutes.

Chair update

Chair Barbara George Johnson addressed the Board and thanked Governor Sherrill for the opportunity to continue serving as NJMIHIA Board Chair. She also congratulated Dr. Raynard Washington, Commissioner of the Department of Health, on his appointment as Vice Chair and invited him to offer remarks. Vice Chair Dr. Washington expressed enthusiasm for the work ahead and a strong commitment to advancing efforts to close gaps in maternal and infant health.

Chair George Johnson also commended NJMIHIA on the release of its second Annual Report, highlighting the Authority's 2025 milestones, partnerships, and progress. The Board will vote to approve the report, after which it will be submitted to the Legislature and posted on the NJMIHIA website.

President & CEO Statement

President & CEO Asare addressed the Board and reflected on another year of progress, partnerships and commitment to maternal health and community. President & CEO Asare advised that NJMIHIA staff will be highlighting key updates included in the Annual Report.

President & CEO Asare updated the Board on NJMIHIA’s strategic planning process, guided by the Center for Health Care Strategies. The Authority has recently identified four strategic priorities: Community Mobilization, State Engagement, the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center, and Public-Private Partnerships and Resource Diversification.

President & CEO Asare also welcomed NJMIHIA Doula Program Management Officer Gabrielle Louis, who provided updates on the Community-Based Doula Training Program. The Authority is actively training participants, convening doulas through quarterly town halls, and elevating the voices of professionals who support mothers and families every day. Key highlights include stakeholder engagement to design the training program, hiring NJMIHIA community-based doulas to support the pilot and mentor trainees, launching the program, and graduating the first cohort. Two essential tools—the NJ Doula Assistant Tool and the NJ FamilyCare Approval Packet—were launched in partnership with NJMIHIA’s sister agencies: the New Jersey Innovation Authority, Department of Human Services, and Department of Health.

Ms. Louis also shared that NJMIHIA hosted its first Doula Town Hall in January 2026 and launched its Train-the-Trainer Program in February. She announced that the second Doula Town Hall will be held on April 9, 2026, at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.

Ms. Louis welcomed NJMIHIA Maternal Care Quality Collaborative (MCQC) Program Manager Pamela Taylor, who provided key updates across the Authority’s innovation programs. NJMIHIA recently launched the Grant for Lasting Outcomes in Women’s Health (G.L.O.W.) Program and hosted an informational webinar attended by more than 100 participants.

Ms. Taylor also shared updates on the Community Health Worker (CHW) pilot, led by Trenton Health Team in partnership with Capital Health. From July 2025 through February 2026, the pilot enrolled 59 participants and connected them to 217 services, including 61 services delivered in February alone. CHWs have received specialized training in postpartum support, safe sleep, and lactation, equipping them to deliver high-quality, culturally responsive care.

Another key initiative is the NJMIHIA Rides program, which provides free, sustainable, zero-emission rideshare transportation for pregnant and postpartum individuals, as well as members of the perinatal workforce in Trenton. To date, 554 rides have been completed, including 311 in February alone—281 for pregnant and postpartum participants and 17 for perinatal workforce members. Ms. Taylor also announced that GOTrenton plans to expand the service area to include Southern Ewing and West Hamilton, increasing access to healthcare, employment centers, food retailers, and other essential community resources.

Ms. Taylor also announced that the MCQC workgroups continue to meet to discuss pressing maternal and infant health matters, craft recommendations and provide subject matter expertise. The next MCQC meeting is scheduled for Friday, May 29, 2026.

Next, NJMIHIA Director of External Affairs and Policy, Maria Del Cid-Kosso, shared information on the 2026 Black Maternal Health Week (BMWH) calendar, noting this year’s theme is “Rooted in Justice and Joy”, and highlighting that it features more than 60 community

events statewide. Ms. Del Cid-Kosso also announced that NJMHIA is partnering with the Children's Home Society of NJ to present its second Community Film Screening on April 14 in Trenton.

Lastly, Ms. Del Cid-Kosso presented, "Welcome Home: A Nurse Visit for Every New Baby", a short film produced by BBC StoryWorks for the Burke Foundation. The film highlights Family Connects NJ (FCNJ), New Jersey's universal nurse home visitation program that offers every family with a newborn, a free visit from a specially trained nurse during the critical first weeks after birth. Since launching in 2024, the program has completed over 10,000 visits statewide, with 18% of families receiving a referral for a significant infant or maternal health concern, or caregiver well-being concern. FCNJ is currently operating in 17 of 21 counties and plans to expand statewide by 2027.

Lastly, President & CEO Lisa Asare opened the floor for questions.

Chair George Johnson commended the FCNJ program and their efforts to expand statewide to ensure that every NJ mother and baby have access to critical healthcare.

Chair George Johnson and Public Member Shakira Abdul-Ali also expressed their interest in the evaluation of the programs and their impact on maternal morbidity in the state.

Public member Dr. Campbell-Oparaji inquired about the NJMIHIA Community-Based Doula Training Program, metrics for the NJMIHIA Rides program, and county-level engagement for the FCNJ program. President & CEO Asare reported that the Doula Training Program has graduated its first cohort and is currently mentoring graduates to support their transition into the perinatal workforce.

Regarding the NJMIHIA Rides program, Public Policy Specialist Sofia Bonsignore shared that GOTrenton generates a heat map identifying frequent destinations, disaggregated by ride codes; a formal report with these metrics is forthcoming.

For the FCNJ program, Lenore Scott, representing the Commissioner of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), noted that a formal evaluation has not yet been completed to maintain fidelity to the model. However, DCF continues to collect testimonials and metrics through focus groups and announced that New Jersey will be the first state in the country to operate the program statewide.

Public Member Maritza Raimundi-Petroski inquired about the application process for the GLOW Grant and whether Doula Town Halls will be offered in additional languages. President & CEO Asare emphasized that community input is central to NJMIHIA's operations, noting that community-based doulas play an integral role in the application review process to ensure the community perspective is reflected. She further shared that, in partnership with the Department of Labor, NJMIHIA has conducted a landscape survey to identify community needs and inform the delivery of trainings and town halls in multiple languages.

Public Member Shakira Abdul-Ali inquired about the economics of the doula profession. President & CEO Asare responded that doulas have multiple potential revenue streams and noted that NJMIHIA is working to ensure these streams are sustainable. Program Compliance Specialist Tonique Griffin added that additional employment opportunities may include positions with community-based organizations, local hospitals, or midwifery practices.

Chair George Johnson commended Ms. Griffin for her perspective and added that there is an opportunity for policy improvements to ensure resources, including reimbursement rates, adequately support the doula workforce.

Public Member Dr. Campbell-Oparaji inquired about the status of Medicaid benefits for doula services. Vice Chair Dr. Washington acknowledged that difficult decisions will need to be made broadly but reaffirmed his commitment to sustainably supporting the full perinatal workforce, including lactation consultants, community health workers, and midwives. Dr. Campbell-Oparaji further emphasized that physicians are a critical component of the perinatal workforce and noted ongoing challenges in recruiting and retaining physicians in underserved areas due to financial constraints.

Matters Requiring Board Action

a. Approval of Minutes of February 25, 2026.

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of February 25, 2026, by Vice Chair Dr. Raynard Washington, and was seconded by Public Member, Andrea Martinez-Mejia. Dr. Damali Campbell-Oparaji abstained. Remaining members voted in favor. The motion carried.

b. Approval of Regular Board Meeting Dates through March 2027.

A motion was made to approve the Board Meeting schedule by Governor Representative, Angela Bethea, and was seconded by Public Member, Maritza Raimundi-Petroski. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

c. Approval of NJMIHIA Annual Report.

A motion was made to approve the Annual Report by Governor Representative, Trish Wallace, and was seconded by Public Member, Dr. Damali Campbell-Oparaji. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

d. Authorization of the Payment of the Community Advisory Stipend as an Annual Salary.

A motion was made to authorize payment by Governor Representative, Angela Bethea, and was seconded by Governor Representative, Holly Low. Shakira Abdul-Ali and Andrea Martinez-Mejia abstained. Remaining members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Public Comment

Temima Cohen, BScN, Zufall Health Prenatal Program Coordinator, commented that her organization is eager to incorporate NJMIHIA doula trainees into their patient care system. NJMIHIA trainees will be supporting Medicaid patients, as well as uninsured patients. Zufall will also support trainees complete their three live births requirement to successfully graduate from the NJMIHIA Community-Based Training Program. Ms. Cohen also expressed her hope that NJMIHIA doulas will remain engaged with Zufall's patients throughout the prenatal process.

Other Business

There was no Other Business.

Adjournment

Chair Barbara George Johnson requested a motion to adjourn. Vice Chair Dr. Washington made the motion to adjourn. Public Member, Andrea Martinez-Mejia, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

I hereby certify this to be a true and original copy of the March 25, 2026, New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority Board meeting minutes.

Lisa Asare

Lisa Asare,
President and CEO