



State of New Jersey

NEW JERSEY MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH INNOVATION AUTHORITY
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Governor

Lisa A. Asare
President & CEO

DR. DALE G. CALDWELL
Lt. Governor

NEW JERSEY MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH INNOVATION AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING

Second Revised Minutes of the Meeting February 25, 2026

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (MIHIA) held on Wednesday, February 25, 2026, at 10:00 AM.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD IN ATTENDANCE

Ex-officio Members

Raynard Washington, Acting Commissioner of Health

Jane Birkhofer, representing CEO of NJEDA

Stephen Cha, Commissioner of Human Services

Trish Wallace, representing Commissioner of Banking and Insurance

Andrea Jackson, 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

Maritza Raimundi-Petroski

Andrea Martinez-Mejia

Rosalee Boyer ¹

¹ Rosalee Boyer was present during roll call but did not audibly respond when called.

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, Senior Executive Assistant, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority

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

Lauren Lalicon, Senior Program & Policy Director, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority

Maria Del Cid-Kosso, External Affairs & Policy Director, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority

Gabrielle Louis, Doula Program Management Officer, NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority

Kamala Allen, Senior Vice President, Center for Health Care Strategies

Kelly Church, Program Associate, Center for Health Care Strategies

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 Update

Chair George Johnson addressed the Board, welcoming the new Ex-officio Board Members: Acting Commissioner of the Department of Health (DOH), Raynard Washington; Commissioner of the Department of Human Services (DHS), Dr. Stephen Cha; Chief Financial Officer of the Office of the Secretary of Higher Education (OSHE), Angela Bethea; Deputy Director of the Division of Family and Community Partnerships of the Department of Children and Families (DCF), Andrea Jackson; Senior Strategic Advisor from the Economic Development Authority (EDA), Jane Birkhofer; and Senior Operations Manager from the Department of Banking and Insurance Trish Wallace (DOBI). She also announced that Andrea Martinez-Mejia, Shakira Abdul-Ali, Jasmine Wright, Chantal Jacqueline Gaston, Vu-An Foster, and Ronsha Dickerson have been appointed to the Community Advisory Committee,

which will officially launch upon their onboarding. Lastly, she announced that the Board would be voting on a resolution to adopt the Fiscal plan for Fiscal Year 2026.

President & CEO Statement

President & CEO Asare gave the Board a brief overview of the key areas that would be addressed in the meeting which included community mobilization efforts, maternal health awareness day activities, an update from the Doula team, an update regarding innovation, and statewide engagement. She then announced that Lauren Lalicon has joined the MIHIA team as the Senior Program & Policy Director. Lauren greeted the Board and expressed excitement about joining the MIHIA team.

President & CEO Asare then spoke to the Board about MIHIA's community mobilization efforts which included Maternal Health Awareness Day activities. She shared that Maternal Health Awareness Day, January 23rd, was first recognized in New Jersey and is now recognized nationally. To celebrate Maternal Health Awareness Day during the week of January 20–30, 2026, MIHIA partnered with Nurture NJ and other organizations to develop a statewide calendar which featured 62 community events covering prenatal care, maternal mental health, infant CPR, wellness workshops, and topics related to maternal and infant health.

President & CEO Asare listed several Maternal Health Awareness Day events that MIHIA staff participated in which included her participation in the Horizon's panel, "Unity for Change as we Move Forward in 2026" which discussed best practices for managed care organization (MCOs) and mechanisms for community feedback, MCQC Program Manager Pamela Taylor's participation in a panel hosted by St. Joseph's Health which focused on maternal mental health supports and advocacy, and the President & CEO's keynote address at Rutgers Robert Wood Johnson Medical School's Maternal health Awareness Day addressing barriers to equitable care, perinatal mental health, and cardiovascular risk. Lastly, on January 23rd, MIHIA hosted a screening of "Black Motherhood Through the Lens" where 30 community partners representing diverse sectors joined MIHIA staff, reinforcing the importance of collaboration in advancing maternal health. She acknowledged the participation and support of Lieutenant Governor Dr. Dale Caldwell, Assemblywoman Verlina Reynolds-Jackson (LD-15), and thanked Board Member First Lady Rosalee Boyer for hosting the event at Greater Mount Zion AME Church.

President & CEO Asare welcomed Doula Program Management Officer, Gabrielle Louis, to update the Board on the Doula Town Hall held on January 8th, 2026. Gabrielle explained that the first Doula Town Hall was held at the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation in Princeton New Jersey and included a MIHA hosted panel that included participation from the New Jersey Department of Health and New Jersey Department of Human Services. She explained that the Doula Town halls are facilitated by doulas for doulas and aim to provide a platform for community-driven discussion, where updates on new tools and services, as well as opportunities for collaboration can be shared. She reported that the town hall produced five action areas: support around doula reimbursement and billing; building hospital partnerships and equity initiatives; supporting doula businesses and career development; expanding

workforce education and growth; and investing in data systems and impact measurement. The next Doula Town Hall will be held April 9th. Gabrielle reported that on February 18th MIHIA launched a second cohort of community-based doula training. The cohort is comprised of 17 students from Middlesex and Mercer counties. MIHIA will open additional cohorts targeted counties within the north and south regions of New Jersey this year. Gabrielle also advised that in late January MIHIA launched a new facilitator training. The following New Jersey Department of Health's Doula Learning Collaborative (DLC) partners participated in the training; the Partnership of Maternal and Child Health of Northern New Jersey, The Cooperative, and Children's Futures. MIHIA will work alongside the DLC to support the expansion of the perinatal workforce across the state.

Gabrielle also announced that MIHIA in partnership with DHS, DOH, and the New Jersey Innovation Authority have launched a new tool that aims to help workforce expansion and access. The NJ Doula Assistant simplifies the Medicaid provider application process for Doulas. This tool streamlines fee-for-service applications to enroll in NJ Family Care. Additionally, to expand access to NJ Family Care coverage doula services, MIHIA, DHS and DOH have introduced a standardized process for approving doula training programs. Training organizations can submit an NJ FamilyCare approval packet to become an NJ FamilyCare-approved training. Once a doula training program is approved, doulas that have received that training are eligible to enroll as Medicaid doulas.

Gabrielle introduced MIHIA's Chief of Innovation, Mahako Etta. Mahako updated the Board on programs connected to the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center. She stated that in December 2025, the EDA approved a \$12.55 million commitment to launch two new Strategic Innovation Centers (SICs) focused on maternal health which created the NJ AIM in Camden/Mullica Hill for general medtech and New Baby New Jersey in Trenton for maternal and infant health solutions that will be located within the Maternal and Infant Health Center. Both will be managed by Plug and Play, and will include a combination of services, including workshops, mentorship sessions, business development services, education opportunities, access to unique equipment and industry partners, and investment opportunities. MIHIA also continues to work with its lead anchor tenants to launch initiatives that strengthen maternal and infant health best practices. The Community Health Worker (CHW) pilot program led by Trenton Health Team in partnership with Capital Health, two of MIHIA's anchor tenants is an example of this collaboration. The pilot embeds CHWs within Capital Health's OB/GYN and Midwifery Care system to bridge clinical care with community-based support to address both medical and social needs during the perinatal period. Since the launch, 48 participants have enrolled, with active recruitment ongoing for 147 additional individuals, and enrollment continues to increase month after month. In November 2025, MIHIA hosted its first Maternal and Infant Health Innovation roundtable which brought together 45 leaders from maternal health organization, companies, and state agencies to define MIHIA's Community-Driven Innovation Framework, identify innovative opportunities or solutions that address maternal challenge and explore how MIHIA can contribute to a broader innovation ecosystem. Lastly,

Mahako updated the Board on the GLOW Grant program and the MIHIA Academy. She advised that MIHIA will host an information webinar on February 26th at 2 p.m. and the grant application will open Friday, February 27th.

Mahako introduced MIHIA's External Affairs and Policy team. MIHIA's External Affairs and Policy Director, Maria Del Cid-Kosso, addressed the Board and explained that statewide engagement is one of MIHIA's strategic priorities. She advised that this team is charged with coordinating MIHIA's efforts to work with MIHIA stakeholders including 22 state agencies and State Legislature. She introduced Senior Program and Policy Director, Lauren Lalicon.

Lauren provided an update on the Nurture NJ Evaluation which was led by Rutgers School of Public Health. She shared that Rutgers found the following: Between 2016 and 2023, New Jersey reduced its low-risk Cesarean birth rate from 30.2% to 27.3%, with an even larger decline among Medicaid recipients (24.8% in 2018 to 21.3% in 2023). Expansions to the state's paid leave programs in 2019 and 2020 led to a 70% increase in family leave usage. Of more than 70 maternal and infant health laws signed by Governor Murphy, 80% have been fully implemented. Investments in Connecting NJ significantly expanded maternal and child health referrals, increasing resource connections fivefold from 2018 to 2024, particularly for family support and nutrition services. Interviews conducted by Rutgers found that Nurture NJ has driven impact beyond policy changes by mobilizing cross-sector stakeholders to reshape maternal and infant health statewide. Lauren advised that the briefs can be accessed for review on Rutgers' evaluation page. Lauren introduced MCQC Program Manager, Pamela Taylor.

Pamela provided updates regarding NJMIHIA Rides. The program was launched on December 1st, 2025. The initiative is supported by the New Jersey Department of Labor, the New Jersey Department of Transportation, GoTrenton!, and Isles through June 30, 2026. She reported that among pregnant and post-partum participants, 208 rides were completed, serving 276 passengers, user satisfaction in this group remained high, with an average rating of 4.8 out of 5. She also reported that members of the perinatal workforce also utilized the program consistently during the first month, completing 27 rides and reported excellent satisfaction, with an average user rating of 5.00 out of 5. GoTrenton! plans to expand the service zones to southern Ewing and West Hamilton, increasing access to healthcare facilities, employment centers, food retailers, and community resources. MIHIA will host an informational webinar in partnership with GoTrenton! and Isles. Pamela also announced that the New Jersey Maternal Care Quality Collaborative's (MCQC) quarterly meeting will be held February 27th, 2026, and encouraged interested Board members to visit the MIHIA website for additional information.

President & CEO Lisa Asare opened the floor for questions.

Public Member, Shakira Abdul-Ali, expressed her excitement for the work that MIHIA is doing. She inquired about New Baby New Jersey SIC. President & CEO Asare explained that SICs are Strategic Innovation Centers and overseen by EDA. She continued explaining that the innovation hub at the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center, New Baby New Jersey, will serve as the 12th SIC. Public member Shakira Abdul-Ali suggested that the doula training be extended to help aid families with children that are on the spectrum enroll in Head Start programs in the state.

Chair George Johnson congratulated MIHIA for its work regarding the Doula Assistant Tool which will aid with doula Medicaid enrollment and the GLOW Program which will help smaller nonprofits build capacity. She also congratulated MIHIA on the innovation work with Plug and Play and NJMIHIA Rides. Lastly, she requested that MIHIA share an events calendar with Public Board members.

President & CEO Asare thanked the Department of Labor for their collaboration with NJMIHIA Rides. She also highlighted that NJMIHIA Rides utilizes electric vehicles and is hoping that to expand the program across the state including in places like Atlantic City.

Holly Low, representing Commissioner of Labor, thanked MIHIA for reporting on the NJMIHIA Rides program. She is pleased to hear the feedback and ratings. She also advised that she has also received feedback from partners at Trenton Health Team and looks forward to exploring potential expansion to other areas. President & CEO Asare thanked DOL representative Holly Low and informed that MIHIA community-based doulas have also provided feedback on the program and promised to keep the Board informed regarding the program in the future.

President & CEO Asare introduced Senior Vice President, Kamala Allen, from the Center for Health Care Strategies (CHCS) to the Board. Kamala thanked the Board. She provided a high-level overview regarding the strategic planning process. She reported that the first three phases of the strategic planning process have been completed. This included a series of interviews of stakeholders. She advised that the third phase of the process is set to be completed next week. This phase was composed of 7 work group meetings with 18 members of the strategic planning working group which is comprised of MIHIA staff and consultants. The last session will include pressure testing the integrity and logic of the interconnected components of the plan as well as establishing assessment components to help monitor the progress of the plan. The fifth phase will include the drafting, reviewing, and finalization of the plan. This phase should culminate at the end of March. The final phase will include support of implementation.

Kamala introduced Program Associate, Kelly Church. Kelly presented MIHIA's guiding statements. She introduced MIHIA's vision statement, "A world where all mothers and babies flourish." She also introduced MIHIA's mission statement, "Empower the village that supports the health and well-being of all mothers and babies through transformative partnerships and community rooted innovation". Kamela then introduced MIHIA's strategic priorities: Community Mobilization, Public-Private Partnership and Resource Diversification, Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center (MIHIC), and State Engagement. She also advised that each priority has goal statement and rationale attached to it. Lastly, Kelly advised that March

will mark the finalization of stakeholder mapping, establishment of measurements of success, and the development of the action plan. April will mark the delivery of the plan. May and June will focus on supporting the implementation of the plan. She advised that the draft plan will be shared with the Board in April and they will have one week to submit their comments.

President & CEO Asare thanked CHCS for their partnership and help developing the plan. She then opened the floor for questions.

Public Member, Maritza Raimundi-Petroski, thanked MIHIA and CHCS for transparency and for including the Board in the strategic planning process. She also expressed gratitude for the opportunity to provide feedback regarding the plan.

President & CEO Asare introduced Chief Financial Officer, Eric Carlsson. Eric introduced the Fiscal Plan for Fiscal Year 2026 (FY26) to the Board. He advised that the plan was developed using expenditure data from MIHIA's first two fiscal years and includes current programmatic and operational priorities. The total funding of \$5.2 million was derived from MIHIA's FY26 line-item appropriation. The budget includes the following categories: Salaries and Wages, Materials and Supplies, Services Other Than Personal, Maintenance and Fixed Charges, Grants-in-Aid, and Additions, Improvements, and Equipment. He advised that line items include previously approved Resolutions and Agreements such as the inaugural implementation of the GLOW Program and MIHIA Academy, the Doula Learning Collaborative with DOH, and MIHIA's MOU with DOL to amplify Temporary Disability and Family Leave Insurance Benefits programs. He also noted that actual expenditures may vary based on procurement timelines, contract execution, and pace of program implementation through the year. Eric also advised that anticipated expenditure remains consistent with the current operating expectations and represents the best current projections.

President & CEO Asare opened the floor for questions once again. Public Member, Andrea Martinez-Mejia, asked if the FY26 budget will relate to the state appropriation FY27. Eric advised that the Governor's budget message has not been presented yet, but MIHIA is currently engaged with OMB and policy to review current needs.

President & CEO Asare yielded to Chair George Johnson.

Matters Requiring Board Action

a) Approval of Minutes of November 19, 2025.

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of November 19, 2025, by Angela Bethea, representing Secretary of Higher Education, and was seconded by Public Member, Andrea Martinez-Mejia. Ex-officio Board Members Trish Wallace, Stephen Cha,

and Raynard Washington abstained. Remaining members voted in favor. The motion carried.

b) Approval of Resolution Approving the Proposed Fiscal Plan for Fiscal Year 2026.

A motion was made to approve the Fiscal Plan for Fiscal Year 2026 by Public Member, Maritza Raimundi-Petroski, and was seconded by Public Member, Rosalee Boyer. Remaining members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Executive Session

There was no Executive Session.

Public Comment

Jill Wodnick, Assistant Director of Maternal Health Policy and Early Relational Health at Montclair State University, a doula and childbirth educator addressed the Board to amplify a previous comment regarding linkages with Head Start. Jill explained that in 2009 she was the Doula Director at Hudson Perinatal Consortia. In 2010, they received funding from DOH to provide doula education for Early Head Start home visitors which allowed for collaboration and coordination in Hudson County. She stated that cross-training early Head Start was expanded in 2011 to Union County with Gateway Northwest. She shared that she would be happy to share her email and could provide previous reports and documentation to those interested. Chair George Johnson thanked Jill and advised that continuing the conversation is critical as we move forward with doula trainings and workforce expansion. She also advised that the conversation could also be extended to the Home Visiting program. Public Member Shakira Abdul-Ali requested Jill's email for further discussion.

Adjournment

Chair George Johnson requested a motion to adjourn. Public Member, Andrea Martinez-Mejia made the motion to adjourn. Stephen Cha, Commissioner of Human Services seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

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

Lisa Asare

Lisa Asare,
President and CEO