



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 ASARE
President & CEO

DR. DALE G. CALDWELL
Lt. Governor

NEW JERSEY MATERNAL AND INFANT HEALTH INNOVATION AUTHORITY BOARD MEETING

Minutes of the Meeting July 22, 2026

Minutes of the virtual meeting of the New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (NJMIHIA) held on Wednesday, July 22, 2026, at 10:00 A.M.

MEMBERS OF THE BOARD IN ATTENDANCE

Ex-officio Members

Dr. Raynard Washington, Commissioner of Health

Jane Birkhofer, representing CEO of NJEDA

Vineeta Kapahi, representing Commissioner of Human Services

Dawn Thomas, representing Commissioner of Banking and Insurance

Andrea Jackson, representing Commissioner of Children and Families

Sandra Gilot West, representing Secretary of Higher Education

David Nelson, representing Commissioner of Labor

Public Members

Shakira Abdul-Ali

Rosalee Boyer

Dr. Damali Campbell-Oparaji ¹

Andrea Martinez-Mejia ¹

Maritza Raimundi-Petroski

Bianka Vargas ¹

¹ Dr. Damali Campbell-Oparaji, Andrea Martinez-Mejia, and Bianka Vargas 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

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

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

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

Catherine Terrero, Senior 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.

NJMIHIA External Affairs and Policy Director, Maria Del Cid-Kosso, announced that the NJ Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority (NJMIHIA) 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.

Ms. Del Cid-Kosso took roll call.

President & CEO Asare welcomed representatives from the Governor's Authorities Unit, and the Office of the Attorney General.

Vice Chair Raynard Washington presided over the meeting with Cindy Cortez keeping the minutes.

Vice Chair Update

Vice Chair Washington opened the meeting by noting that the day's agenda would highlight several key NJMIHIA milestones, including the launch of the Community Advisory Committee and the announcement of the inaugural G.L.O.W. Program award recipients.

He also welcomed Bianka Vargas as the newest member of the NJMIHIA Board. Ms. Vargas shared her enthusiasm for joining the Board and her commitment to advancing efforts that improve maternal and infant health outcomes across New Jersey.

Vice Chair Washington then announced the six members of the Community Advisory Committee, whose role will be to ensure that NJMIHIA's initiatives remain informed by and responsive to the needs of the communities it serves.

President & CEO Report to the Board

President & CEO Asare recognized Black Maternal Mental Health Week (July 19–25), highlighting the importance of maternal mental health, health equity, and access to culturally responsive care and support for Black mothers and families across New Jersey.

She provided an overview of recent NJMIHIA milestones and initiatives, noting that additional program updates were included in the Board Updates Memo. Key highlights included the launch of the G.L.O.W. Program (Grants for Lasting Outcomes in Women's Health) and the NJMIHIA Academy, representing a \$1 million investment to support community-based organizations and early-stage enterprises advancing maternal and infant health. The initiative includes \$750,000 in grant funding and \$250,000 for technical assistance and capacity-building support. Following the application process, 15 organizations were selected for funding across North, Central, and South Jersey.

President & CEO Asare also provided updates on the launch of the Community Advisory Committee, the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Fund (MIHIF), and three advisory workgroups established to support NJMIHIA's strategic priorities: the Executive Workgroup, Program, Innovation & Impact Workgroup, and Community & Health Equity Workgroup.

President & CEO Asare announced the addition of Nicole Kirgan to the NJMIHIA team, highlighting her role in strengthening communications and increasing awareness of NJMIHIA's programs and impact. President & CEO Asare also shared updates on the expanded MIHIA Rides program, which aims to increase transportation access for pregnant individuals and the perinatal workforce throughout Mercer County through partnerships with the Departments of Transportation and Labor.

Looking ahead, President & CEO Asare provided an update on planning for the inaugural NJMIHIA Summit, which will build upon the former Nurture NJ Summit and advance statewide collaboration on maternal and infant health. She concluded by emphasizing NJMIHIA's continued progress in developing partnerships, infrastructure, and community-driven solutions to improve maternal and infant health outcomes across New Jersey.

President & CEO Asare welcomed NJMIHIA Chief of Innovation, Mahako Etta, to present on the progress at the Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Center (The Center).

Ms. Etta provided an update on the Center, highlighting continued progress toward establishing the Center as a statewide hub for equitable maternal and infant health care, workforce training, research, and community collaboration. Construction remains on schedule for completion in 2027, while operational planning continues in partnership with the NJ Economic Development Authority, the Office of Information Technology, and the Center's anchor tenants to support a seamless launch and coordinated service delivery.

Gabrielle Louis, NJMIHIA Doula Program Manager, shared updates on NJMIHIA's Community-Based Doula Training Program, including the successful completion of the third Doula Town Hall, which brought together more than 100 doulas and birth workers to strengthen connections and advance birth equity efforts. She also announced the July 23, 2026, NJMIHIA Doula Graduation of 30 community-based doulas and 22 facilitators, marking a significant milestone in expanding New Jersey's culturally responsive perinatal workforce.

NJMIHIA Senior Program and Policy Director, Lauren Lalicon, provided an update on NJMIHIA's collaboration with the Department of Labor to develop a multilingual paid family leave awareness campaign focused on increasing access to Temporary Disability Insurance (TDI) and Family Leave Insurance (FLI), particularly among communities experiencing disparities in maternal and infant health outcomes. She also highlighted recent expansions to job-protected leave protections in New Jersey and shared information on new resources, including the SimpleFile tool to assist eligible families in accessing the state's Child Tax Credit.

Ms. Lalicon welcomed Tristan Vanech, Senior Product Manager of the NJ Innovation Authority (NJIA), who provided an overview of the Child Tax Credit program, discussed SimpleFile's functionality, and highlighted outreach strategies to connect eligible families with this important resource. Mr. Vanech announced that in partnership with the NJ Division of Taxation and Code for America, NJIA's Affordability Initiative, SimpleFile, will provide up to \$1,000 per dependent aged 5 and under through the NJ Child Tax Credit.

President and CEO Asare opened the floor for questions from the Board.

Board members expressed interest in hosting additional presentations to further increase awareness of SimpleFile and expand outreach efforts by having navigators available at various community locations to provide filing assistance and support.

Matters Requiring Board Action

a. Approval of NJMIHIA Annual Board Meeting Minutes.

A motion was made to approve the meeting minutes of March 25, 2026, by Public Member, Maritza Raimundi-Petroski, and was seconded by Public Member, Rosalee Boyer. Sandra Gilot West, Dawn Thomas, and Bianka Vargas abstained. Remaining members voted in favor. The motion carried.

b. Approval of Resolution Authorizing an MOU with NJDCF to Support the NJMIHIA Summit 2026.

A motion was made to approve the Resolution by Public Member, Andrea Martinez-Mejia, and was seconded by Public Member, Shakira Abdul-Ali. All members voted in favor. The motion carried.

Public Comment

There was no Public Comment.

Adjournment

Vice Chair Washington requested a motion to adjourn. Andrea Jackson made the motion to adjourn. Public Member, Dr. Damali Campbell-Oparaji, seconded the motion. The meeting was adjourned.

I hereby certify this to be a true and original copy of the July 22, 2026, New Jersey Maternal and Infant Health Innovation Authority Board meeting minutes.

Lisa Asare

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President and CEO