

## Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities Policy & Procedure

<b>Policy Number:</b>	2009-02
<b>Subject:</b>	COMMUNICATING WITH THE LEGISLATURE
<b>Adopted:</b>	February 5, 2009

### **Policy Statement:**

The Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities (Council) was created to help Washington become the healthiest state in the nation by striving to eliminate health disparities by race/ethnicity and gender. Toward this end, the Council is charged with:

- creating a state policy action plan to eliminate health disparities;
- promoting and facilitating communication, coordination, and collaboration among state agencies, the private sector, and communities of color to address health disparities;
- developing recommendations for improving the availability of culturally and linguistically appropriate health literature and interpretive services; and
- gathering information to understand how the actions of state government ameliorate or contribute to health disparities.

In some instances, the Council's responsibilities may be served through identifying, monitoring, and communicating with the Legislature about proposed legislation relevant to the Council. This policy and procedure provides guidance to assist the Council in its decisions whether to provide written or oral testimony or otherwise communicate with the Legislature about proposed legislation.

### **Procedure:**

Recognizing that decisions about whether to communicate with the Legislature about proposed legislation need to occur in a very short timeframe, the Council authorizes the Chair to make these decisions on behalf of the Council. The Chair may, however, at his or her discretion, consult with individual Council members in making a decision.

During session, Council staff will routinely monitor legislative bill introductions, committee agendas, and other legislative matters to identify bills that may warrant attention by the Council. Council staff shall consider the following guidance when deciding whether to bring a legislative proposal to the attention of the Council Chair:

- The policy or budgetary proposal has a direct impact on the Council's statutory powers and duties or it is directly related to policy recommendations supported by the Council in its state action plan or any interim document approved by the Council, and
- communicating to the Legislature about the policy or budgetary proposal does not run counter to any policy, guidance, or other activity of the Governor or any agency, board, or commission with representation on the Council.

In addition to responding to bills or budget proposals that warrant the Council's attention, the Chair may work with staff and individual Council members to respond to inquiries from members of the Legislature or to provide information about Council priorities and activities to legislators or staff at a legislator's request.

The Council Chair or his or her designee must approve correspondence with legislative staff or members. Such correspondence should routinely be copied and sent to the Department of Health

Office of the Secretary – Policy, Legislative, and Constituent Relations, as consistent with the Board of Health's policy and procedure on communicating with the Legislature (Policy Number 2001-004).

An individual Council member may speak or write to the Legislature on proposed legislation or other matters. In such cases, the speaker should clarify that such communications are from a single Council member and do not necessarily reflect the views of the entire Council.

Any Council member or Council staff member who addresses comments to the Legislature or its staff on proposed legislation relating to the Council must report such activity to the Executive Director of the State Board of Health who must prepare a consolidated quarterly report on such activity as required by the Public Disclosure Commission according to 42.17.190 RCW.