



**Draft Minutes of the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
December 3, 2020**

Virtual ZOOM Platform

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By phone: +1 253-215-8782, ID: 825 9393 1516#

Council members present:

Marietta Bobba	Diane Klontz	Millie Piazza
Benjamin Danielson	Haley Lowe	Rian Sallee (alternate)
Michelle Davis (alternate)	Lena Nachand (alternate)	Victor Rodriguez
Sara Franklin	Paj Nandi	Leah Wainman
Lydia Faitalia	Julia O'Connor	Greg Williamson
Jessica Hernandez	Jan Olmstead	

Council members absent:

Jill Wisehart

Staff present:

Christy Hoff, Council Manager	
Cait Lang-Perez, Health Impact Review Analyst	Elise Rasmussen, Social Equity in Cannabis Task Force
Lindsay Herendeen, Health Impact Review Analyst	Melanie Hisaw, Executive Assistant
	Kelie Kahler, Communication Manager

Guests and other participants:

LinhPhung Huynh, State Department of Health
Lori Pfungst, Department of Social and Health Services

Benjamin Danielson, Council Chair, called the public meeting to order at 9:01 a.m. and read from a prepared statement. He invited members to introduce themselves and share how they hold those they love close during this unprecedented time.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: [Approve December 3, 2020 agenda](#)

Motion/Second: [Member Nandi/Member Bobba. Approved unanimously](#)

2. ADOPTION OF FEBRUARY 6, 2020 MEETING MINUTES

Motion: [Approve the February 6, 2020 minutes](#)

Motion/Second: [Member Bobba/Member Williamson. Approved unanimously](#)

3. COUNCIL ANNOUNCEMENTS AND OTHER BUSINESS

Christy Curwick Hoff, Council Manager, updated the Council on the appointment of Jessica Hernandez with the Commission on Hispanic Affairs (CHA). This position was held by Anita Ahumada and her term ended. Ms. Hoff said that Liz Coleman, who was

representing the Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board (WTB) had taken a new position. Julia O'Connor, who was sitting in on behalf of the WTB said the agency was working to find a replacement. Ms. Hoff shared the progress updates submitted to the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee and said the Council has a progress report due in January. She said there have been legislative work sessions on the Office of Equity Task Force, Environmental Justice Task Force and the Social Equity Cannabis Task Force and added that pre-filed bills will start to be introduced soon.

The Council took a break at 10:01 a.m. and reconvened at 10:10 a.m.

4. BRIEFING—SOCIAL EQUITY IN CANNABIS TASK FORCE

Ms. Hoff provided a brief introduction to the Social Equity in Cannabis Task Force. She said the Council was charged with staffing the Task Force but was not provided with resources for dedicated staff support. She said they identified some funding to keep Elise Rasmussen on staff to provide support.

The Council watched a brief video on the history of the War on Drugs (available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HSozqaVcOU8>). Ms. Rasmussen provided an overview of Washington State data related to cannabis convictions and said that the purpose of the Task Force is to focus on equity in the retail cannabis sector. Ms. Hoff said medicinal marijuana dispensaries in Washington State had diverse ownership, but people of color were far less likely to be granted a license in the regulated market. She provided an overview of E2SHB 2870 (2020 Legislative Session) that created the framework for the Cannabis and Social Equity Program at the Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB), as well as created this Task Force. She explained that the Task Force must work within the framework that was already passed in legislation.

Greg Williamson, Council Member, asked if the Task Force will have the opportunity look at the health impacts and health inequities related to cannabis use as well as the impacts of gentrification, wealth gap, generational poverty, first-time business ownership, employment, etc. Ms. Hoff said she imagines conversations will touch on each of those topics. Marietta Bobba, Council Member, asked if the Task Force would consider the types of jobs that are being created; for example, whether they are low-wage jobs or positions that create living wages. Jan Ward-Olmstead, Council Member, affirmed the importance of Member Williamson's questions about the impacts on health and the social determinants of health.

5. SAVING LIVES—COMMERCIAL TOBACCO POLICY FOR HEALTH EQUITY

Member Ward Olmstead introduced the webinar on Commercial Tobacco Policy for Health Equity and shared a statement from the American Public Health Association (APHA) that sets aspirational goals for state and local health departments to make tobacco issues more equitable. She stated that the Council will have opportunity in the future to come back and revisit this topic and consider signing on to support this statement as well. Council members signed-off the meeting at 10:56am to sign-in to the 11:00am "Commercial Tobacco Policy for Health Equity" webinar hosted by the Healthy King County Coalition.

The Council took a lunch break at 12:00 p.m. and reconvened at 12:30 p.m.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

Maria Batayola, El Centro De la Raza and Seattle Beacon Hill Neighborhood Council, introduced herself and asked the Council to help influence the Governor on strategies to address the intersectionality of health, environment, and climate related to airplane air and noise emissions related to SeaTac airport's planned expansion. Specifically, she asked the Council to support efforts to:

- Include airplane emissions in greenhouse gas emission reduction targets.
- Fund a study to investigate the correlation between ultrafine particle emissions and pre-term births to determine if regulation is needed.
- Include environmental justice analyses under SEPA.
- Fund the inclusion of flight path information and retain historical data in the Health Disparities Map.
- Pass the HEAL Act to establish environmental justice in the state, and
- Lobby to pass U.S. HR 5109 Fairness in Airspace Includes Residents Act to amend airspace safety requirements to include safety of residents.

7. APPROVAL OF PROPOSED 2021 MEETING SCHEDULE

Victor Rodriguez, Vice Chair, asked for any discussion or concerns about the proposed 2021 meeting schedule. Melanie Hisaw shared the proposed schedule.

Motion: [The Council approves the Proposed 2021 Meeting Schedule.](#)

Motion/Second: [Member Williamson/Member Hernandez. Approved unanimously](#)

8. BRIEFING—ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE TASK FORCE

Vice Chair Rodriguez stated that the Council has the opportunity today to hear the final recommendations of the Environmental Justice Task Force and to decide whether they would like to endorse the recommendations. Ms. Rasmussen provided a brief overview of the work of the Environmental Justice Task Force. She shared that the final report of the Task Force was unanimously approved and that members noted that there are gaps in the recommendations. For example, she shared that a Tribal leader was never confirmed to the Task Force. Ms. Rasmussen shared a brief overview and information supporting the Task Force's recommendations related to three main areas: mapping, community engagement, and model policies and measurable goals.

Members discussed the interactions between the impacts of environmental injustice and COVID-19 on communities and Tribes and highlighted how these inequities are due to racism. They also discussed the need for agencies to align their mapping work to identify and address inequities. Chair Danielson said the Task recommendations need to be adopted holistically to make a difference. Maria Batayola expressed her appreciation for the Task Force's work. Vice Chair Rodriguez said that everyone will benefit from the recommendations and that this work can bring a connection and feeling that we are all in this together.

Motion: [The Council endorses the recommendations of the Environmental Justice Task Force as outlined in its final report, *Environmental Justice Task Force: Recommendations for Prioritizing EJ in Washington State Government*.](#)

Motion/Second: [Member Piazza/Member Davis. Member Ward Olmstead abstained.](#)

Member Ward Olmstead stated that she is personally supportive, but that she has to abstain because there was not Tribal representation on the Task Force and it would be disrespectful to Tribal sovereignty to vote on this topic in her position as the delegate to the Council for the American Indian Health Commission. Ms. Rasmussen thanked Member Ward Olmstead for sharing her abstention and comments. She said the Task Force has had conversation with a few different tribes and they have generally been supportive. She added that there will be HEAL Act legislation introduced during the 2021 session and individuals working on that legislation are engaged in conversations with tribes. Millie Piazza, Council Member, noted that, federally, work on environmental justice with tribal nations is separate from work at federal agencies, and that perhaps that should be the model for Washington State as well.

9. BRIEFING—EQUITY OFFICE TASK FORCE

LinhPhung Huynh, State Department of Health, said she hopes communities see themselves in the Equity Office Task Force's final report. She expressed her gratitude to the other Task Force staff and members. She shared her family history as immigrants to this country from Vietnam where they experienced persecution from the government.

Ms. Huynh reviewed the equity definition from the Task Force, as well as the vision and mission statements that the TF created (on file). She then said that the office's scope would be integrating equity internally in state government's systems, structures, and policies. It is not meant to provide direct services. The office is meant to see the big picture for equity across the state and to guide an enterprise-wide effort through a unified vision of equity. It would serve as a conduit, provide guidance and technical assistance, and build a diverse and culturally humble workforce. She said the hope is for a fully resourced office to be a catalyst for systems transformation. She said the report calls for a community advisory committee for the office of equity. She spoke to the need for agency accountability and transparent performance measurement.

She said the task force is recommending 25 full time equivalent staff position and a \$4 million annual operating budget. She said success relies on a holistic implementation of the Task Force's recommendations and that includes adequate funding. She added that we can't afford to not invest in equity and that doing so will send a powerful message to communities across the state.

She said legislation did pass to create the office of equity and it was signed into law by the governor earlier this year. The office was established on July 1, 2020 but the office's budget and community advisory board were vetoed due to the budget shortfall. She shared recommendations for immediate action to adequately fund the office, provide adequate funding for outreach and engagement, establish the community advisory board in statute, codify DEI responsibilities for agencies, give the office rulemaking authority, and declare and manifest Washington as an anti-racist state government.

Member Ward Olmstead thanked Linh for sharing her personal story and stressed the importance of stories in moving this work forward.

Motion: The Council endorses the recommendations of the Equity Office Task Force as outlined in the *2020 Office of Equity Task Force Final Proposal*.

Motion/Second: Marietta Bobba/Greg Williamson. Approved unanimously.

10. BRIEFING—POVERTY REDUCTION WORK GROUP

Diane Klontz, Council Member introduced the work of the Poverty Reduction Workgroup. She said it is unacceptable that more than half a million children live in families that struggle to make ends meet. The workgroup had a racial equity consultant, a steering committee, agencies, legislators, community representatives, tribal representatives, and the racial/ethnic commissions. The end result was a 10-year plan and 8 strategies. Lori Pflugst, Department of Social and Health Services, introduced herself and shared the process the workgroup went through and the recommendations from the plan (on file). Chair Danielson recommended that the Council endorse the recommendations of the poverty reduction workgroup and asked if there are any questions.

Greg Williamson, Council Member, asked if youth were involved in the work. Ms. Pflugst said the steering committee was very diverse including people who recently transitioned to adulthood, but they didn't have anyone under the age of 18. Lena Nachand, Council Member, noted the recommendation on universal income and said the Health Care Authority found that the extra \$600 a week due to the Covid pandemic affected eligibility for Medicaid.

Motion: The Council endorses the recommendations of the Poverty Reduction Work Group as outlined in its final report, *Reducing Poverty & Inequality in Washington State: 10-Year Plan for the Future*.

Motion/Second: Haley Lowe/Jan Olmstead. Approved unanimously

11. DISCUSSION—FUTURE COUNCIL PRIORITIES

Ms. Hoff provided a summary of past conversations the Council had been having on future priorities and their statutory authority. She said the Council has been a focus for promoting equity in the state and now that the Office of Equity was being stood up, she asked how the Council could align with and not duplicate those efforts.

Chair Danielson asked what would it look like to truly achieve health equity. He said he wanted the Council to have uncomfortable conversations, that become transformative actions. Member Williamson reflected on previous Council conversations about moving away from a deficit-based approach to health. He said the Council had an opportunity to continue the momentum to push for equity and to respond to communities' lived experience. Member Bobba said that COVID has made us very aware that the definitions of equity and health are not universal.

David Ortiz, community participant, shared how geography impacts people's health. He thanked the Council for its efforts to include community in its discussions and said it helps to build better civic muscle. Ms. Huynh reflected on Mr. Ortiz's request that government define what wellbeing looks like in communities and for youth.

Member Piazza said over the last eight months, she's had had incredible learning opportunities as well as frustrating conversations on the need to address diversity and inclusion. She said all equities matter and each has its own challenges and solutions. She said this group of colleagues have helped her to understand the differences and

that they have an opportunity to look at metrics and pathways to work on the different equities; environmental, social, health, transportation, housing, criminal justice, etc.

Ms. Hoff shared a lesson learned from the Social Equity in Cannabis Task Force. She said Washington was the very first state to legalize and regulate cannabis and when the regulatory framework was created, equity was not considered and those that were disproportionately affected by cannabis prohibition enforcement were left out. Communities of color, particularly Black people, didn't have the opportunities to gain generational wealth in the industry. Now they are left trying to fix the problem and it makes it harder to work toward equity in an industry that is already inequitably established. Member Williamson shared a process called Theory U involves people gathering on the front part to make sure they see the whole story. Then they are asked to contemplate on their own and then gather again. He said sometimes asking the question differently helps us answer better and more efficiently. If we are more thoughtful on front end, we can do a better job in the long run.

Maria Batayola appreciated the approach to identify common principles and processes to serve and create unity. She encouraged the Council to hold steady, even as the pot is stirred. She advised that Council members may not know the answer, but it can help guide with principles and with thought leadership.

Chair Danielson posed a question for a future meeting, "What does it mean to live in an antiracist state?" He asked members to take time in the coming days for reflection and to put pen to paper until we reconvene again. He said this is forever work, always growing, making mistakes and learning and caring for our communities. He gets recharged in this passion for his work. He thanked everyone for the inspiration, time and constructive work.

ADJOURNMENT

Benjamin Danielson, Council Chair, adjourned the meeting.

GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES

Benjamin Danielson, Chair

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