

**Advisory Committee Members Present:**

Flor Alarcon Avendana (phone)  
Nathan Furukawa  
Jonathan Green  
Sonja Hallum

Diane Klontz, Chair  
Marcia Meyers (phone)  
Lua Pritchard (phone)  
Babette Roberts

**Staff:**

Christy Hoff

**Staff:**

Joanne Gordon, Department of Revenue

**Action Items:**

- Christy will send out meeting minutes and work with committee members during the interim to develop draft recommendations for discussion at the next meeting.

**1. Welcome and Introductions:**

- Diane Klontz welcomed the group, facilitated introductions, and reviewed the agenda and goals for the day's meeting.

**2. Early Learning:**

- Jonathan Green introduced himself and gave a presentation on Department of Early Learning activities, which covered the following: Race to the Top Early Learning Challenge, Early Achievers, State and Local Coordination Project, Home Visiting, WaKids, Child Care Subsidies, Strengthening Families Washington, Washington State Early Learning Plan, and the Washington State Early Learning and Development Guidelines. He said the state and local coordination project received public comment and highlighted three issues raised: the need for more culturally competent early learning professionals in some communities, for more bicultural and bilingual early learning professionals, and for more early learning services in rural and refugee/immigrant communities. He reviewed the priorities in the early learning plan.
- Jonathan supported recommendations aimed at expanding universal preschool, noting that by law any expansion of early learning must be phased in beginning in school districts providing all-day kindergarten programs (districts with high percentages of children on free and reduced meals—higher poverty) and supporting cultural and linguistic competence training for early learning professionals.
- Marcia Mueller asked the group to consider a recommendation to raise the compensation for early learning professionals.
- Babette Roberts said efforts to assist people in refugee/immigrant communities receive the training needed to become early learning professionals would meet multiple needs. Sonja Hallum suggested working with community and technical colleges in communities where DEL has identified a need for more diverse early learning professionals.

- Marcia asked about feasibility and where the committee was most likely to make an impact. Jonathan said the universal preschool proposal could benefit if the Health Disparities Council was able to demonstrate that supporting early learning is an important strategy for addressing health disparities.
- Flor Alarcon Avendana offered her support for more bicultural/bilingual early learning providers.

### **3. Tax and Redistribution System:**

- Babette compiled a list of assistance programs offered by DSHS, the Departments of Commerce, Agriculture, and Health, and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. Flor asked about access for those who do not use the Internet. Members shared different ways community members could learn about and access the services.
- Sonja stressed the need for a recommendation to help rural communities access services. Flor and Babette agreed, adding the need to address access issues for refugee and immigrant populations.
- Jonathan said it sounded like capacity was a theme linking early learning and access to services.
- Nathan Furukawa gave his presentation, which reviewed how Washington's tax system was regressive and provided a higher tax burden for the poor. He discussed four distinct policy options: (1) recommend income tax on highest earners (similar to I-1098) and direct revenue to education and health programs, (2) recommend replacing sales tax with an income tax, (3) establishing a 5 percent capital gains tax, and (4) recommend funding of working families tax rebate. He offered support for an integrated approach of implementing an income tax that includes capital gains tax, include a working family tax rebate, and including a reduction in state sales tax.
- Sonja said the education funding committee had a similar presentation. She said there is some political will for a revenue generation proposal to fund education.
- Marcia said in the short term the only way to reduce poverty is to increase the income for those at the bottom and to increase programs that transfer tax revenues to those in need via cash benefits and necessary services. She said many of the eligibility requirements for different state services make it hard for people to get those services even when they are in need. She offered support for a recommendation to streamline eligibility requirements to make it easier for those in need to qualify for and obtain services.
- Sonja discussed the importance of employment in increasing income and the need to increase access to education and employment.

### **4. Empowering Communities to Make Healthy Choices and Access Existing Resources:**

- Christy said she identified a few policy options based on discussions from the last meeting. Options included: restoring funding for the Health Systems Resources Grant Program, studying and making recommendations for building the community health workforce, ensuring funding for food assistance programs, and reaffirming past Health Disparities Council recommendations related to access to nutritious foods.
- Babette said Massachusetts was piloting a program to incentivize the purchase of healthier foods with SNAP benefits. She said she would do some research on the

program's outcomes. Joann Gordon said it might be possible to offer B&O tax breaks for commercial establishments who participate in such a program.

- Members discussed the food roundtable as an opportunity for further developing recommendations to improve access to food and healthy foods in diverse communities.
- Jonathan suggested having an intent section for the recommendations that highlighted the equity and social justice focus of the Council's work. Members discussed the connections among poverty, early learning, and health disparities and how rural communities are more likely to be in poverty and less likely to have access to services. Marcia agreed but cautioned about singling out a population, such as rural communities.
- Babette said it sounded like the group was circling around the theme of capacity again.
- Members discussed focusing on the need to increase capacity for services in rural communities and racially/ethnically diverse communities in order to reduce poverty and promote health equity. For early learning, the recommendation would be to increase capacity for culturally and linguistically appropriate early learning programs by supporting cultural and linguistic competency training for early learning professionals. A second recommendation would be to increase capacity for health care services in rural communities by possibly funding the Health Systems Resources Grant Program and including a coordinated transportation system. A third recommendation would be to support the food roundtable and recommend it consider the needs of diverse communities and rural communities.
- The group discussed the feasibility of creating a recommendation to change the tax system. The state agency representatives on the committee and the Council expressed concern that they might not be able to support such a recommendation. Committee members agreed to work with the non-agency participants on the committee to craft a separate recommendation on tax policy to include in the policy paper.

#### **5. Meeting Summary and Wrap Up:**

- Christy will send out meeting minutes and work with committee members during the interim to develop draft recommendations for discussion at the next meeting.
- The next meeting is Monday, August 27 from 1-4pm at the Asia Pacific Cultural Center in Tacoma.