



Final Minutes of the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
January 3, 2022
Virtual ZOOM Platform

Council members present:

Marietta Bobba	Diane Klontz	Victor Rodriguez
Benjamin Danielson	Stephen Kutz	Greg Williamson
Sara Franklin-Phillips	Julia O'Connor	Rian Sallee (Alternate)
Nicole Johnson	JanMarie Ward (Alternate)	

Council members absent:

Lydia Faitalia	Quyên Huynh
Jessica Hernandez	Leah Wainman

Council staff present:

Christy Curwick Hoff, Council Manager
Cait Lang-Perez, Policy Analyst

Guests and other participants:

During the virtual meeting, approximately 24 members of the public joined and 7 people participated in Public Comment. The Council thanks all those who took time to join, listen in, and share their personal experiences and perspectives during the meeting.

Benjamin Danielson, Council Chair, called the public meeting to order at 11:03 a.m. and read from a prepared statement (on file). Council members introduced themselves.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: Approve January 3, 2022 agenda

Motion/Second: JanMarie Ward/Diane Klontz. Approved unanimously

2. PUBLIC COMMENT

Chair Danielson, announced that the Council was transitioning to the public comment period and read from a prepared statement.

Phillip Petty, African American Cannabis Association, thanked the community support for the Social Equity in Cannabis Task Force work and said the recommendations support equity. He said community is grateful to be part of this change and they are looking forward to the vote. He said everyone is in harmony around the recommendations and that Black empowerment is good for the entire state.

Jim Buchanan, public participant, expressed appreciation for the special meeting. He said community has been participating in the Task Force's work and they are proud the Task Force is moving the line in the sand. He said the community is proud of Governor Inslee for funding community reinvestment in the proposed supplemental budget. He said members of the community got caught up in emotion at the last Council meeting because of the importance and legacy of this work, and that it is time to make amends and support the work of the Task Force.

Joanna Ramos, Washington State Coalition for Language Access (WSCLA), thanked the Council for its work around language access over the years. She said continued efforts are needed. She said there is still a lack of acknowledgement of the importance of language access in the healthcare sector. She said the state must move forward in training interpreters for spoken word and sign language, adding that it will help build a pipeline and to support a multilingual workforce across the state.

Raft Hollingsworth, Hollingsworth Cannabis Company, said he is a member of the Social Equity in Cannabis Task Force and a co-lead of the Technical Assistance and Mentorship Workgroup. He said the recommendations have the full support of the community as well as the industry. He said it has been a lot of hard work and a long process, and he hoped for the Council's support.

Darrell Powell, NAACP, said he is skeptical and is not here to express support, but to demand action. He said the community has already made concessions with Governor Inslee around the budget. He read the proposed motion of the Council and its operating principles. He said the recommendations of the Task Force align with the purpose of the Council and that it should be an easy yes vote for the Council.

Elmer Dixon, public participant, said he has been fighting this battle since he was 17 years old and understands the damage the "War on Drugs" has done on his community. He asked the Council to support the recommendations of the Task Force. He said reparations are long overdue.

Pastor Carey Anderson, public participant, expressed his support for social equity and that there is nothing more beneficial than providing support for the African American community. He stated his church is the oldest African American church in the state. He said groups like this should work to empower and open doors for BIPOC communities.

3. DISCUSSION—SOCIAL EQUITY IN CANNABIS TASK FORCE

Chair Danielson said the heavy lifting has been done by the Social Equity in Cannabis Task Force. He said Council staff were responsible for providing support to the Task Force. He said the Governor is interested in the vote, adding that Governor Inslee included funding in his proposed budget for community reinvestment. He read the proposed motion language from the memo (on file). JanMarie Ward, Council Member, made the motion and Greg Williamson, Council Member, seconded it.

Chair Danielson asked for discussion. Rian Sallee, Council Member, asked the Council if the words “War on Drugs” should be capitalized or in quotation marks to help in the understanding of the formality and seriousness of the “War on Drugs.” Chair Danielson said it would be considered as a friendly amendment. Sara Franklin-Phillips, Council Member, made the motion to put “War on Drugs” in quotation marks and Steve Kutz, Council Member, seconded it. The motion passed unanimously.

Victor Rodriguez, Council Vice Chair, said he is a father with three kids, including two boys. He shared that his 4-year-old son recently asked if he will experience racism and how he had to tell his son that, yes, he is going to experience racism. Vice Chair Rodriguez asked how else the Council could respond but by supporting the Task Force’s work and reparations to communities that have experienced racism for hundreds of years. He said that the rivers, mountains, and life itself is on the side of the work. He said it is personal and emotional and encouraged members to pass the motion. He thanked Darrell Powell for reminding the Council of its operating principles and for holding members accountable.

Motion: The Council believes that the “War on Drugs” has resulted in significant harm to the Black community and other Communities of Color. As the entity responsible for providing staff support to the Social Equity in Cannabis Task Force, the Council strongly supports the Task Force’s work and the broad policy concepts of ensuring licenses are issued to those most affected by the “War on Drugs,” reducing barriers and supporting individuals who receive social equity retail licenses to foster success, and reinvesting cannabis tax revenue back into disproportionately impacted communities.

Motion/Second: JanMarie Ward/Greg Williamson. Approved unanimously.

Chair Danielson noted that the Council vote was unanimous. He said Council members hold dual roles of advocating for social justice and ending racism and functioning within state governance. He emphasized that this is just one piece of support for a larger body of work the Task Force is doing and thanked the group for standing in support of BIPOC communities. He asked if anyone had closing comments. Member Kutz said it is a rare opportunity for the Council to make a statement that has immediate impact and he is grateful that the Council has stood up in these moments.

Member Kutz thanked Christy Curwick Hoff for her work staffing the Council. Members recognized Christy for her service, and she shared a few comments. Christy Curwick Hoff said she is grateful and looked forward for new staff to help support the Council as it enters a new chapter of its work. Member Williamson thanked Darrell Powell for bringing the group back to the operating principles because he believes that, whether it is the cannabis work, or the Office of Equity Task Force, or environmental justice, he believes the Council has been helpful in contributing to conversations around the state. Chair Danielson said this meeting is an example of how community voice can move policy change.

ADJOURNMENT

Benjamin Danielson, Council Chair, adjourned the meeting at 12:00p.m.

GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES

Benjamin Danielson, Chair

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