



Final Minutes of the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
May 19, 2022
Virtual ZOOM Platform

Council members present:

Marietta Bobba	Nicole Johnson	Greg Williamson
Benjamin Danielson	Diane Klontz	Rian Sallee
Michelle Davis (Alternate)	Stephen Kutz	
Sara Franklin-Phillips	JanMarie Ward	
DoQuyen Huynh	Millie Piazza	

Council members absent:

Lydia Faitalia	Lena Nachand (Alternate)	Leah Wainman
Willie Frank	Elizabeth Perez (Acting)	
Jessica Hernandez	Victor Rodriguez	

Council staff present:

Lindsay Herendeen, Policy Analyst	Cait Lang-Perez, Policy Analyst
Melanie Hisaw, Executive Assistant	Tracy Schreiber, Policy Analyst
LinhPhụng Huỳnh, Council Manager	Nathan Thai, Communications Consultant

Guests and other participants

Anita Ahumada	Joana Ramos, WASCLA
Vivien Chen, JLARC	Jessica Zinda, DSHS
Rebecca Connolly, JLARC	

During the virtual meeting, approximately 12 members of the public joined and 1 person 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 9:04 a.m. and read from a prepared statement (on file).

Chair Danielson offered a loss acknowledgment on the acts of hate and violence in this country. He said these actions aren't the rarified actions of individuals. There is a national mentality and a nationwide and pervasive troubling energy of racism and hate that continues to pervade this country and impact all of us. Chair Danielson said we are part of a country and a system that is rife with racism. We need to be more intentional. This Council is a space where we can stand and act and defy and reject the kind of messages, hate, and destruction that events like Buffalo have wrought on our society and souls. The presence of violence makes our elders fearful of doing basic acts that make us human. He said we must talk about this and make this present in the work. He encouraged everyone to join in pushing ourselves to be completely and truly committed to making a difference in our work.

Stephen Kutz, Council Member, supported Chair Danielson's loss acknowledgment. Member Kutz shared he was recently in Washington, D.C. for a conference where he provided a land acknowledgement. He said there was a Native American village located on what is now the White House grounds, even though some may consider these people to be extinct. He said the Native Americans in that area have not been recognized, but they are still there today. Member Kutz asked everyone to think about the lands they are on.

Member Kutz commented on the theme of inequities in our systems, including those in the pandemic response. He said there are health care deserts in the state, some in central Washington and some in the middle of our biggest cities. He said our system does not provide everyone with adequate health care and does not measure inequities, and we can do better.

Chair Danielson introduced LinhPhung Huỳnh, Council Manager. Ms. Huỳnh introduced herself as new staff. She spoke about her personal and professional background as well as her commitment to upholding the Council's areas of strength as she provides staff support.

Ms. Huỳnh reviewed the Zoom protocol for the meeting and members introduced themselves.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion: [Approve May 19, 2022 agenda](#)

Motion/Second: [Marietta Bobba/Millie Piazza. Approved unanimously.](#)

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Motion: [Approve December 2, 2021 & January 3, 2022 minutes](#)

Motion/Second: [Stephen Kutz/Greg Williamson. Approved unanimously.](#)

3. ANNOUNCEMENTS, COUNCIL BUSINESS, AND LEGISLATIVE UPDATE

LinhPhung Huỳnh, Council Manager, reported on Council business (slides on file).

Topics included:

- 2022 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Summit sponsored by the Office of Financial Management
- Executive Order 22-04 on the implementation of the Pro-Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Plan and Playbook
- Comment Letter on the Climate and Economic Justice Screening Tool
- Health Equity Zones Initiative
- Public Health Advisory Board

Ms. Huỳnh said the legislative recap document (on file) provides an overview of state budget investments and some adopted bills from the 2022 Legislative Session. She said she would seek members' guidance on how Council members and staff can prepare each other for legislative session each year.

The Council took a break at 9:57 a.m. and reconvened at 10:14 a.m.

4. LEGISLATIVE EQUITY TOOLS

Stephen Kutz, Council Member, spoke about his new role as Clinic Manager for the Suquamish Indian Tribe. He acknowledged governments' broken promises to tribes and how this has adversely affected tribal communities.

Benjamin Danielson, Council Chair, said there are a variety of tools state agencies, legislators, or the Governor can use to assess potential equity impacts of legislation. The presentations today will touch on the following questions: What does the tool do? What need does it fill? What change does the tool seek to create?

Vivien Chen and Rebecca Connolly, staff with the Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC), presented on the new Racial Equity Analysis tool. JLARC has been the State Legislature's performance auditor since 1973 and consists of 8 senators and 8 representatives, evenly split between parties to help ensure independence. JLARC gives the Legislature accurate and unbiased answers to its questions. She said their work incorporates research, trainings, and interviews with subject matter experts. Ms. Connolly shared JLARC's five guiding principles for racial equity analyses, its study process, and its use of logic models (see presentation on file).

Member Kutz asked about the Legislature's process for determining review questions and how topics related to health disparities can be elevated. Ms. Connolly said staff do not guide or influence decisions, and constituents can speak to their legislators and ask for specific studies. Any legislator can propose a bill or budget proviso that includes a JLARC study and the actual assignment depends on whether that proposal passes the Legislature.

Marietta Bobba, Council Member, said it is important to include impacted communities in the study structure and questions. Chair Danielson said this JLARC process contributes to an anti-racist approach and asked how we can continue working to resolve structural biases. He asked presenters how they would dream about anti-racist work. Ms. Connolly said there are discussions at the national level on how to incorporate equity analyses in studies and JLARC staff are in a continuous learning mode. JLARC needs to be responsible in holding agencies accountable only to what is in their scopes.

Greg Williamson, Council Member, said he appreciates JLARC's detailed, thoughtful work and their non-partisan nature. He asked if JLARC staff feel empowered to ask questions about agency process and their use of participatory processes (e.g., participatory budgeting and co-design with impacted communities). Rebecca responded that when the processes relate to the study and the agency's process, then JLARC staff dig into that information.

Staff from the State Board of Health provided a refresher on the Health Impact Review (HIR) tool and recapped their activities from the 2022 Legislative Session. Cait Lang-Perez and Tracy Schreiber, State Board of Health staff, provided background on the HIR tool, which uses a health- and equity-in-all-policies approach. The State Board of

Health and Health Disparities Council jointly support the HIR program. Lindsay Herendeen, State Board of Health staff, said staff have completed 112 HIRs since 2014 on a broad range of topics related to the social determinants of health (see presentation on file).

Ms. Herendeen highlighted House Bill 1191 as an example of how HIRs have informed policy. That HIR informed multiple adopted budget provisos as well as upcoming proposals for the 2023 session. Additionally, the Health Benefit Exchange used data from the HIR to include equity impacts on a waiver application it submitted to the federal government, which (if approved) would allow folks to purchase a plan on the Exchange regardless of immigration status.

Chair Danielson asked how staff identify unintended consequences. Cait noted that staff learn about potential impacts through interviews with key informants located in and outside of Washington, including individuals with lived experience. As an example, Ms. Herendeen said staff have learned proposals related to the criminal legal system often have potential unintended consequences. She said this information is not necessarily in literature, but staff hear it candidly in conversations.

Member Bobba said she appreciates staff notifications about HIRs they are working on, so she can share information with the Department of Social and Health Services. Chair Danielson said it is a privilege to see how the HIR process has grown and that information sharing leads to transparency and policy change. Diane Klontz, Council Member, thanked the HIR team for their work and said it is essential to lift up voices from our communities and hear stories to better inform policy.

Chair Danielson invited staff from ECONorthwest to speak. Dr. Jade Aguilar, ECONorthwest, said their firm was hired by the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to help develop recommendations for a new legislative equity assessment (LEA) tool. Jade reviewed the project background, some proposed options and considerations for each, and similar approaches other states are taking (see presentation on file).

Council members engaged in discussion and provided feedback. Member Williamson said different processes lend themselves to different ways of thinking. He asked how the processes we inherit can create certain questions that then lead to certain answers. He wondered to what extent government could step out of legislative conversations of “what’s happening this week” and talk about the racist impacts and unintended consequences in policy that are unfortunately timeless. He hoped the process of governing can improve over time and encouraged ECONorthwest to incorporate these concepts in their work.

Chair Danielson asked Jade to speak on the non-partisan nature of assessments and how to create a universal sense of fairness and constructive justice in the outcomes of the legislative process. He asked how we can appeal to the common humanity of this work in a way that is transcendent. Dr. Aguilar said staff with JLARC, the HIR program, OFM, and legislative committees are seen as non-partisan and support processes that help legislators make their best decisions. If legislative staff coordinate the LEA process, they need to be newly hired and take on that same non-partisan aura.

Jessica Zinda, Department of Social and Health Services, shared that DSHS now requires an equity impact statement for all its budget proposals. She added it is best to involve people and do research as early as possible when developing a proposal. Member Kutz said the Council should comment on proposals that may cause disparities. Chair Danielson said the ask of us to be bold includes the willingness to ask questions like, “Is this built on something that reinforces the status quo that we’re supposed to be undoing?” A new tool should not be built on a foundation of inequities.

5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Benjamin Danielson, Council Chair, announced the Council was transitioning to the public comment period and read from a prepared statement (on file).

Joana Ramos, Washington State Coalition for Language Access (WASCLA), expressed appreciation for the opportunity to learn about the legislative equity tools. Joana stated that WASCLA has informed HIRs and HIRs are helpful. Joana said the state enterprise needs to consider equity at all phases, including in planning and not solely for legislation. WASCLA has heard from people in the community about a lack of information on what agencies are doing to identify language and communication needs and how those needs are being addressed. Joana shared that WASCLA works with various agencies and has found limited awareness in this type of approach.

6. FORMAT OF FUTURE COUNCIL MEETINGS

LinhPhung Huỳnh, Council Manager, provided a briefing on recent updates to the Open Public Meetings Act (OPMA) and the Governor’s proclamations related to the COVID-19 state of emergency (see memo on file). She said these changes prompt the question: How does the Council want to hold future public meetings while the COVID-19 state of emergency continues to exist, both at the state and national levels? She asked members to discuss and determine whether the Council can hold in-person public meetings with reasonable safety during this time. During the discussion, she provided information on the guidelines Council/State Board of Health staff must follow, which limits use of certain agency buildings for public meetings.

Some Council member comments included:

- Meetings are not as rich when fully remote; look forward to being together in person again.
- This is a dynamic situation and we will continue to face challenges from COVID-19, even after the state of emergency. At that time, the Council should still consider meeting in a way that is safe.
- The Council has always had an option for people to join our meetings remotely, even before the pandemic. We should continue doing that to reach as many people as possible, so the Council can hear more voices.
- Beyond ensuring access, we need to reach out to communities and encourage participation.
- Consider the burden on staff who would have to attend meetings in person.
- We are still in an emergency and need to treat it as an emergency. We need to meet in a way that is safe. Vaccines are protective, but not fully protective.

- The Council's past meeting in Everett (2019) was successful; it was in-person with community and we offered audio access.
- Even after the state of emergency, there will be options for virtual participation in order to comply with some new requirements in the OPMA.
- Limitations on Council members' in-person attendance and limited use of state agency space supports Proposed Motion 1 during the state of emergency.

Motion: Due to the COVID-19 state of emergency as well as the reasons articulated by the Council today, the Council determines it is not reasonably safe to hold in-person meetings at this time. The Council directs Council staff to organize the September meeting as a fully remote meeting and to continue to organize fully remote meetings for the duration of the Washington State of Emergency or the National Emergency, whichever terminates later.

Motion/Second: Member Williamson/Member Kutz. Approved unanimously as amended.

The Council took a lunch break at 12:27 p.m. and reconvened at 12:51 p.m.

7. INSTITUTIONAL EDUCATION STRUCTURE AND ACCOUNTABILITY ADVISORY GROUP

Benjamin Danielson, Council Chair, said Council members have identified youth incarceration as a shared area of concern in past conversations. They have talked about the many ways inequity and racism—structures way upstream—can lead to a common pathway of incarceration and imprisonment, with impacts on young people. Chair Danielson acknowledged that—as a Black male—if he had aged out of the foster care system, he would have faced a 65% chance of being incarcerated and a 2% chance of going to college. This is a measure of systematically traumatizing people whose lives are marked by trauma due to systems, generations, and many impacts that can disproportionately hit particular communities. This conversation relates to policy, to research, to where our society invests in our future, and where we seek to interrupt the cycles that continue to repeat themselves in the lives and generations of too many.

Chair Danielson said the teachings of Frederick Douglass conclude it is far better to invest in the well-being of young people than try to repair broken adults. He said this is upstream work and we are morally compelled to do it. He invited staff from the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), the Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), and the American Institutes of Research (AIR) to present.

Haley Lowe, Department of Children, Youth, and Families (DCYF), said we have a lot of work to do to break a fixed system that was not designed to serve all students. People are more familiar with the school-to-prison pipeline than with addressing the educational gap for incarcerated youth. The Advisory Group's focus is to remove barriers, improve access, and ensure all students in Washington have the opportunity to succeed.

Council members watched a video about JJ, a youth incarcerated at Green Hill Rehabilitation Center and School in Chehalis.

Emmelia Wargacki, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), provided an overview of laws affecting institutional education (presentation on file). Ms. Wargacki pointed out OSPI is operating under a funding model that the Legislature has not updated since 1995. Ms. Lowe shared some progress, saying fewer youth are being sent to institutions. Ideally, we would not send children to prison at all. However, when we do, youth need the right resources and curriculum so they have a plan when they exit the system. Ms. Lowe emphasized the need to be more agile and creative in how government meets students' needs. Ongoing review of system performance and educational outcomes will take several years to ensure policies are not full of empty promises.

Mary Kay Dugan, American Institutes for Research, spoke about the Advisory Group's significant scope of work, which amounts to an overhaul of the current system and creation of an infrastructure that supports students in the long-term. Ms. Dugan invited everyone to visit the Advisory Group's website and attend its public meetings.

Greg Williamson, Council Member, thanked the Council for making room for this topic and said it relates to daily work across Juvenile Rehabilitation and Family Support (DCYF). He said there are equity challenges for the young people who end up in county and state rehabilitation programs. Member Kutz said that while youth incarceration is not the answer, closures of juvenile institutions highlight other existing challenges. Chair Danielson said there is complexity in how youth incarceration intersects with Council members' work.

Stephen Kutz, Council Member, added that youth need stabilizing relationships and it would be great if youth who experience incarceration could have exposure to various opportunities and seek higher education. Ms. Lowe responded that institutional education includes secondary education, mentoring opportunities, and engaging youth in discovering their full potential. What is wounded in relationship must be healed in relationship. If we can focus on restorative justice in communities, that's where healing can happen. Jessica Zinda, Department of Social and Health Services, said she feels strongly about the process of healing in community and thanked presenters.

Nicole Johnson, Council Member, said she has been thinking about how incarceration and the criminal legal system intersect with agriculture, such as the use of chain gangs as an extension of slavery. She referenced an article called *Urban Farming and the Criminal Justice System* by Shaheed Cruz and shared conversations she has had with her teenage son about his fellow classmates who are struggling. We need to wrap our arms around these kids because they could get into situations leading to interactions with the criminal legal system.

Millie Piazza, Council Member, said these topics are very relevant to her work at the Department of Ecology. The nexus is where incarceration facilities are located, if they are on or adjacent to contaminated sites, as well as the quality of water, air, and food in those spaces—and the humanity of all that. She will share this topic and JJ's video with

her executive leadership team. Chair Danielson stated this is about standing strong in taking this work back to our respective places.

Presenters provided closing thoughts. Ms. Dugan welcomed the Council's collective action. Ms. Wargacki said education touches so many parts of the community. Ms. Lowe said this is the first time government has collectively said this group of young people matter and we are going to invest in them, and this is an unprecedented opportunity to make a difference. We know the intersections between poverty, racism, and incarceration, and there is no group farther from educational justice. Ms. Lowe welcomed the Council's partnership in disrupting the system and asked the Council to help elevate the importance of the Advisory Group's work.

The Council took a break at 1:53 p.m. and reconvened at 2:00 p.m.

8. ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE COUNCIL

Benjamin Danielson, Council Chair, said the Health Disparities Council provided staff support to the Environmental Justice (EJ) Task Force between 2019 to 2020. The Legislature passed the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act in 2021, which incorporates and builds on many of the Task Force's recommendations. The HEAL Act also created the Environmental Justice Council. Millie Piazza, Council Member, shared the significance of the HEAL Act and having a space of accountability for communities impacted by environmental concerns.

Sierra Rotakhina, Council Manager for the Environmental Justice Council, provided an overview of the HEAL Act and the EJ Council's structure and membership (presentation on file). Ms. Rotakhina stated the EJ Council's purpose is to convene a community forum, provide guidance for agencies, and promote agency accountability. It will serve as another way for community to engage in state government. Ms. Rotakhina shared information about state agency implementation and requirements to adopt community engagement plans, incorporate EJ in agency strategic plans, incorporate EJ in budget and funding decisions, and conduct EJ assessments on significant agency actions (e.g., agency request legislation, rulemaking). Tribal liaisons from required agencies have formed a workgroup to coordinate advice to the HEAL agencies on tribal engagement.

Ms. Rotakhina said something unique about the EJ Council is its membership of mostly community members. The intent is for the EJ Council to be empowered to write reports and recommendations that do not require approval from agencies or the Governor's Office. Agencies will still provide insight on state government operations.

Member Piazza asked Council members to consider how the Health Disparities Council can work in concert with the EJ Council. She stated there are many opportunities for overlap, especially on tough questions like how to (or whether to) define "overburdened communities" and how to measure progress. Greg Williamson, Council Member, shared that all of the issues the Health Disparities Council has discussed today are related and overlap in ways that are intricate and complex. There is need and we can do something about it.

Ms. Rotakhina stated that the EJ Council is brand new and there is a lot to learn from the Health Disparities Council. She said there is synergy across the two councils and is excited to work together. Nicole Johnson, Council Member, shared that the EJ Council work intersects heavily with her work at the Department of Agriculture.

Member Bobba said centering community is important and the Health Disparities Council Meeting in Everett was great because of the high level of community participation. Anita Ahumada, public participant, added that community member participation on these groups provides strength. Communities with limited English proficiency need to be involved because they are often forgotten. Community is the reason these councils exist.

Member Piazza said there is growth in the Health Disparities Council when we do not create boundaries and box ourselves in ways that do not have to exist. Our work needs to move forward in this way because it is so interdependent. It will be a challenge and an opportunity for the EJ Council to remove boundaries and determine how to create open space. She reflected that the Health Disparities Council has grappled with this challenge and it has taken a while to get to where we are now.

LinhPhung Huynh, Council Manager, expressed admiration for the fortitude and boldness of the Council, Council members, and other groups in getting us to this point where we now have a State Office of Equity, an Environmental Justice Council, and a Health Disparities Council that is going strong. It feels like a Springtime in state government, and it's a beautiful time. She said she wants to support the Council in thinking about how we could do our part and work with partners to align all this work. The Council previously voted to stand up an advisory group to reimagine its statute, and she would appreciate hearing members' guidance on how to revise the Council's space and its role.

Chair Danielson noted that folks have used words like "Spring" and "unprecedented" today, and sometimes that opportunity for growth and change comes alongside hardship. He said the next 5 to 7 years are going to be critical for the communities that have been the most harmed. We have a history in this country of taking people who are traumatized and making them more traumatized, like with youth who are incarcerated. He asked the Council to be carefully precious with this sacred time—when resources and opportunities come together and when hardship and challenges for community are at the greatest. The needs of community for repair and sustenance are important and he hoped that sense of onus was something shared as a Council.

Member Davis said she feels we are sitting in a sweet spot. In state government, we miss an opportunity to grow if we do not reach out and learn from each other. The EJ Council's radically new approach to centering leadership in community creates an opportunity for change and she encouraged the Council and others to dig deep into the recommendations that the EJ Council will develop.

Member Bobba shared that individuals who were formerly incarcerated participated on a DSHS workgroup to develop recommendations for reducing barriers to long-term care. This is an example of how community voice is being integrated and recognized

even by the Legislature. Member Williamson shared another example of how youth have been informing the housing voucher program and helping develop a budget request from DCYF. He stated that there is a lot of hope in state government right now. The Council needs to take things that are working and knit them together to take advantage of the preciousness of this time.

Chair Danielson said that he would like to keep this responsibility at our focus and make it heavy for us. He stated that we have reparative work to do and we owe it to our young people.

9. COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Benjamin Danielson, Council Chair, asked members to share what they are carrying with them today and what they will continue to think about.

Nicole Johnson, Council Member, said she will continue to look for the connections and intersections between various areas of work and how those also interact with her personal life. Rian Sallee, Council Member, shared that she feels her work is always coming home with her and that is a gift as it provides her time to reflect. Jessica Zinda, Department of Social and Health Services, said her work is about finding intersections for herself and others and operationalizing equity. This council is providing her another opportunity to do that.

Chair Danielson stated that the Council's conversations are simultaneously a learning and an unlearning, a construction and a deconstruction, and an iteration and an unrepressed sense that we can change and reinvent things—and that we are accountable to that. He encouraged members, as they start to put together a workgroup, to think about what edges we want to push on for the future of the Council.

ADJOURNMENT

Benjamin Danielson, Council Chair, adjourned the meeting at 3:03 p.m.

GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES

Benjamin Danielson, Chair

To request this document in an alternate format or a different language, please contact Kelie Kahler, Washington State Board of Health Communication Manager, at 360-236-4102 or by email at kelie.kahler@sboh.wa.gov TTY users can dial 711.

PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington • 98504-7990
360-236-4110 • wsboh@sboh.wa.gov • sboh.wa.gov