



**Final Minutes of the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities**  
**September 15, 2022**  
Virtual ZOOM Platform

**Council members present:**

Benjamin Danielson	Diane Klontz	Naisha Williams
Michelle Davis (Alternate)	Millie Piazza	Greg Williamson
Renee Fullerton	Victor Rodriguez	Jessica Zinda
DoQuyen Huynh	Rian Sallee (Alternate)	
Nicole Johnson	JanMarie Ward (Alternate)	

**Council members absent:**

Lydia Faitalia	Kelly McLain (Alternate)
Willie Frank	Lena Nachand (Alternate)
Sara Franklin-Phillips	Elizabeth Perez (Alternate)
Jessica Hernandez	Leah Wainman
Stephen Kutz	

**Council staff present:**

Lindsay Herendeen, Policy Analyst	Cait Lang-Perez, Policy Analyst
Melanie Hisaw, Executive Assistant	Kelie Kahler, Communications Manager
Jo-Ann Huynh, Administrative Assistant	Nathan Thai, Communications
LinhPhụng Huỳnh, Council Manager	Consultant

**Guests and other participants**

Vicki Lowe, AIHC Executive Director	Jeff Ketchel, WSPHA Executive Director
Adrian Dominguez, WSPHA President	

During the virtual meeting, approximately 12 members of the public joined. 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 9:00 a.m. and read from a prepared statement.

JanMarie Ward, Council Member, gave opening remarks that highlight connections between the day's agenda topics. Member Ward provided background on the Washington State Public Health Association's (WSPHA's) efforts to adopt a resolution

and action strategy to address racism as a public health crisis. She spoke about the significance of reproductive health and reproductive justice, including her personal experience of witnessing the passage of *Roe v. Wade* in 1973. She mentioned that WSPHA is drafting a resolution on reproductive healthcare and this area of work could be an opportunity for collaboration between the Council and WSPHA.

Chair Danielson offered a water acknowledgement and honored the role of water in historical and present-day issues. Member Ward said land acknowledgements are a way to acknowledge the original peoples of the land and the intentional policies that disrupted their lives. She spoke about the need to address these harms and other inequities through policymaking, and said reparations and reciprocity come to mind.

Victor Rodriguez, Council Vice Chair, spoke about his farmworker community and their connection to the land and water. He spoke about dedicating his labor to future generations and the environment. Council members and staff introduced themselves and each person called in an ancestor to the space to help guide the group.

#### **1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

**Motion:** [Approve September 15, 2022 agenda](#)

**Motion/Second:** [Klontz/Fullerton](#). Approved unanimously.

#### **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

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

**Motion/Second:** [Davis/Klontz](#). Approved unanimously.

#### **3. ANNOUNCEMENTS AND COUNCIL BUSINESS**

This item was not discussed due to time limitations.

#### **4. GROUNDING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ACCESS IN A REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE FRAMEWORK**

LinhPhung Huỳnh, Council Manager, provided a briefing and referred to a memo for Council member consideration titled “Grounding Reproductive Health Access in a Reproductive Justice Framework” (on file). The memo includes background on the Council’s past research on reproductive health access in Washington, the Council’s 2019 policy recommendations, and recent national events that further restrict reproductive rights, including the U.S. Supreme Court’s June 2022 ruling in *Dobbs v. Jackson*. The memo acknowledges that groups who continue to be most impacted by a lack of access to reproductive healthcare are poor people, Black and Brown people, Indigenous people, trans people, non-binary people, and those who are already on the margins. Staff Member Huỳnh said today’s discussion can help the Council position itself to inform the Governor and Legislature, as the Governor has made commitments to defending reproductive health access, including abortion services and contraceptives.

Cait Lang-Perez and Lindsay Herendeen, Council Staff, provided a recap of the Council's research and policy recommendations on reproductive health access from 2019 (presentation on file), including a status update on what action the Governor, Legislature, or state agencies have taken in each policy area.

Staff shared their research on the reproductive justice framework. Highlights include:

- In 1994, Black women coined the phrase “Reproductive Justice” from “the concepts of reproductive rights, social justice, and human rights as a way of centering the specific lived experience of Black women” (In Our Own Voice).
- A Reproductive Justice framework expands beyond choice, focusing on access to services and emphasizing the human right “to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children, and parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities” (Sister Song).
- Although the Council's 2019 recommendations on reproductive health access do not use the term “reproductive justice,” the Council's intentional approach of centering access aligns well with a reproductive justice framework.

Members engaged in discussion. Member Ward shared that the American Indian Health Commission (AIHC) has been working with tribes and the Washington State Department of Health on an addendum to the AIHC's Maternal Mortality Report, to be presented to the Legislature this year. She asked about Council staff's research on maternal mortality. Staff Member Herendeen said that while staff have researched maternal mortality for various Health Impact Reviews, staff have not had capacity to update the Council's literature review on reproductive health access. She acknowledged that much has changed since their initial literature review in 2018, including impacts by the COVID-19 pandemic that have likely increased barriers for certain groups.

Renee Fullerton, Council Member, asked how the consolidation of healthcare systems over the past decade may have impacted access to reproductive services. Staff Member Herendeen confirmed that this issue came up in both the literature and key informant interviews during research in 2018. Staff Member Huynh shared that the Governor has signaled an intent to propose or support legislation in the upcoming session around this issue.

Members discussed adopting a reproductive justice framework to guide the Council's efforts. Vice Chair Rodriguez said that by doing so, the Council would be uplifting the wisdom of the people most affected by restrictions to reproductive rights. He said multiple systems work together to maintain oppression (intersections of oppression). Systemic racism is produced and manifested by institutions such as governments, healthcare systems, non-profit systems, and culture. Vice Chair Rodriguez said the scale of the state's response must match the problem—it must be statewide, systems-wide, comprehensive, and long-term.

Chair Danielson connected the themes of reproductive justice and intersectionality to organizing around the topic of Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women. He said

there are intentional actions in our systems to promote racial and gender bias, and bodies like the Council must make intentional counter-maneuvers to fight back.

The group discussed some tangible impacts from adopting a reproductive justice framework. Chair Danielson and Staff Member Huynh spoke about having a common grounding as Council members engage legislators and the Governor around education and policy recommendations. Vice Chair Rodriguez said agencies could use this framework to inform coordinated action. Having a common analysis of the problem and common language facilitates collaboration across systems. The Council should think about its wholeness as an ecosystem, with each member having their own role. Member Ward added that each sector brings a different perspective of the community experience, and having a shared framework allows us to think about how the issue of reproductive health access impacts the whole ecosystem as well as specific communities.

Diane Klontz, Council Member, shared that the Department of Commerce has a wide-ranging portfolio of work and it is important to center community voices and lived experience when making decisions on recommendations, policy, and program implementation. Member Piazza said reproductive justice and environmental justice are inextricably connected. She reflected on her decades of work in the environmental space and said that lack of public participation in government meetings is due to agencies not making their work relevant to the public, who must invest energy in survival and caring for their families. She connected environmental justice to economic justice and other struggles more broadly.

Jessica Guidry, public participant, asked whether the Council's 2019 report included recommendations for local public health jurisdictions. Staff replied that the Council's report does not include recommendations specific to local public health and shared a link to a webinar hosted by the American Public Health Association on reproductive rights and justice, which heavily informed the research for today's meeting.

The Council paused discussion to hear public comment during the designated public comment period.

## **5. PUBLIC COMMENT**

There were no participants signed up to give public comment at the designated time.

## **4. GROUNDING REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH ACCESS IN A REPRODUCTIVE JUSTICE FRAMEWORK (continued)**

The Council voted to adopt a Reproductive Justice framework to guide its efforts.

**Adopted Motion:** [The Council recognizes that a legal right to abortion and other reproductive healthcare services is critical to preserving life, humanity, and dignity, and that a legal right without practical access is not sufficient. The Council](#)

acknowledges that people who experience systemic and intentional oppression, perpetuated by a history of medical harm—including Black, Brown, Indigenous, trans, and non-binary people, people who are undocumented, and those with low income and limited access to wealth—have been most impacted by lack of access and legal restrictions to reproductive healthcare. Therefore, as part of our anti-racist efforts, the Council adopts a Reproductive Justice framework when considering inequities in health and access and when making recommendations to reduce and eliminate inequities. We commit to understanding how racialized power systems limit access to health and opportunity and commit to centering racial justice in our work.

**Motion/Second:** Ward/Davis. Approved unanimously.

The Council took a break at 10:57 a.m. and reconvened at 11:20 a.m.

## 6. AMERICAN INDIAN HEALTH COMMISSION (AIHC)

Vicki Lowe, AIHC Executive Director, and JanMarie Ward, Health Disparities Council Member and AIHC Consultant, spoke about AIHC’s history and role, legislative accomplishments and plans for the 2023 Session, and culturally-appropriate and community-specific strategies such as *Pulling Together for Wellness*, *Seven Generations*, and *Generational Clarity* (presentation on file).

They said AIHC’s approach is rooted in community strengths, vision, and values. Vicki Lowe said that AIHC build practices that come from tribal cultures to make people in tribal communities healthy. There’s a need to look at whole health—the AIHC does not work in the silos of Washington State government. She reminded the group that when Washington State wants to build something, it needs to include the voices of Indigenous people. JanMarie Ward said relationships are so important and it is critical to understand the role of culture. She provided an historical overview of U.S. and Washington State policies that forced cultural shifts for tribes and causes ongoing harm.

Vicki Lowe said that vision and values are not aspirational—they are operational. She said acceptance is the opposite of oppression. JanMarie Ward shared the concept of Seven Generations as: looking back three generations and getting our ancestors’ strength; putting that in the current context; and thinking about three generations out for the benefit of our children, grandchildren, and great grandchildren. She said we have the potential of having that impact and reach, so we also carry that responsibility.

Council members and presenters discussed how the Council can support the AIHC’s work, as well as lessons from the AIHC that the Council can incorporate in its statute redesign project. Vicki Lowe said a lot of the language AIHC helped codify is about people, a focus on wellness, and the whole person. The AIHC helped defined concepts that the state had refused to define before, including “historical trauma”

and resilience,” which opened a door and made these concepts applicable to practices like behavioral health billing for the Medicaid program.

Chair Danielson emphasized the wholeness of our work and the power in recognizing interconnectedness. We should support one another’s work in advancing rights and justice for everyone. Vicki Lowe agreed that when we raise up the most vulnerable, we are raising up everyone. She said there is space in our government-to-government relationship to end oppression.

Vice Chair Rodriguez embraced what JanMarie Ward shared: a lot of our work is cultural work. He encouraged everyone, especially member agencies, to step in when they see oppressive practices in government. He said there are multiple layers for change, and the cultural layer is nuanced, challenging, and powerful. Chair Danielson commented that “every moment is a justice moment.”

The Council took a lunch break at 1:05 p.m. and reconvened at 1:40 p.m.

## **7. WA STATE PUBLIC HEALTH ASSOCIATION (WSPHA): RACISM IS A PUBLIC HEALTH CRISIS**

Adrian Dominguez, WSPHA President, JanMarie Ward, Health Disparities Council Member and WSPHA President-Elect, and Jeff Ketchel, WSPHA Executive Director, gave an overview of the Washington State Public Health Association’s history and purpose, 2020-2022 strategic plan, vision and mission statements, and current priorities (presentation on file). Jeff Ketchel provided information on WSPHA’s resolution declaring racism as a public health crisis (on file), including context on resolutions in other jurisdictions. Council Member Ward discussed the opportunity for collaboration and how the Council can provide leadership.

Council Member Ward and Jeff Ketchel facilitated two breakout groups, using the following questions to guide a conversation around *Racism as a Public Health Crisis*:

- What is your agency’s role in public health? What programs and initiatives, that are linked to population health outcomes, does your agency provide?
- What are your reactions or thoughts to WSPHA’s resolution and plan? What is happening in your agency that aligns?
- How is your agency sharing power? If it does not, does it want to share power? Why or why not?
- Are there initiatives or legislation (local, state, or federal) that should be proposed or supported by WSPHA?

The whole group came back together and shared highlights from their breakout room discussions. Jeff Ketchel said his room discussed how various organizations can share power and priorities, including promotion of the public health resolution. Council Member Ward said her group discussed shifting power, which is a practice the Council could continue to explore.

Chair Danielson said that a Washington State declaration on racism as a public health crisis may be the bridge the Council needs to move from where we are to where we want to go—in sharing power, in listening, and in doing good work. A declaration can spur action that helps agencies become their better selves.

The Council took a break at 2:57 p.m. and reconvened at 3:08 p.m.

## **8. RE-ENVISIONING OUR FUTURE – PROCESS FOR RECOMMENDING UPDATES TO COUNCIL STATUTE**

Vice Chair Rodriguez shared an overview of the Health Disparities Council's origins, enacting statute, and purpose for reviewing and recommending updates to its statute (presentation on file). He said the Council has come to recognize that eliminating health disparities among people of color and women is not possible as long as racism is present. Racism is a public health crisis. This means racism is a threat to the health and safety of every single Washingtonian. We need solutions that are at-scale with the crises we are facing. Confronting racism requires increased investments, authentic community engagement, and pro-equity anti-racist policy action.

Council members reviewed the Council's mission statement and operating principles, affirming that they still hold true. Greg Williamson, Council Member, said the Council has agreed to be bold and brave, take action, and challenge the status quo.

Staff Member Huynh shared a general process and timeline for recommending updates to the Council's statute, with the goal of having a legislative proposal ready for the 2024 Legislative Session. Member Klontz expressed gratitude that efforts are coming into alignment and the Council has a new momentum that's unstoppable. Jessica Zinda, Council Member, expressed excitement about working on these changes and sees updates to the Council's statute as strengthening, disrupting, and moving the state forward to better serve people in Washington.

Council members discussed how the day's various topics relate to the Council's statute redesign effort. Nicole Johnson, Council Member, shared connections between reproductive justice and her agency's focus (agriculture), using the example of harm caused by pesticide drift and counter efforts to ensure safe environments for families. She spoke about centering farmworkers' reproductive rights and healthcare access. Rian Sallee, Council Member said she is excited to work on the redesign and reminded the group to honor past efforts and what we have learned over the years—we stand up because of the work others have done before us. Member Fullerton shared her interest in power-sharing and how that practice can be incorporated in the redesign. Michelle Davis, Council Member, said that revising our statute could have a significant impact on the people we serve.

Vice Chair Rodriguez said the Council could ground itself and the process of updating its statute in the wisdom of Black people, particularly Black women, and Indigenous people. The knowledge we use matters—it dictates the outcome. He recalled the Seven Generations principle from today’s presentation from the American Indian Health Commission, and wondered how we could include youth voices in the redesign. Youth are uniquely positioned to call out the contradictions that adults may have come to accept or are a part of perpetuating. He spoke about interlocking systems of oppression (e.g., the school-to-prison pipeline) and how to ensure the Council will be adequately resourced to engage multiple sectors to address these interlocking systems.

Member Davis said the Washington State Board of Health made a statement on racism as a public crisis in June 2020. She noted the state has not made a similar statement and that it is not too late to remedy that. Council members can share this topic with their agency executive leadership for discussion. Member Williamson said the first step to dismantling systems that cause trauma is to acknowledge where public health disparities have been created *intentionally*. Member Ward said social determinants of health were previously considered demographic issues instead of policy issues, which indicated an acceptance of the status quo. She said the Council could be the right group to change this practice.

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Victor Rodriguez, Council Vice Chair, adjourned the meeting at 4:06 p.m.

## **GOVERNOR’S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES**

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Benjamin Danielson, Chair

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PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington • 98504-7990  
360-236-4110 • [wsboh@sboh.wa.gov](mailto:wsboh@sboh.wa.gov) • [sboh.wa.gov](http://sboh.wa.gov)