



**Final Minutes of the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities
August 23, 2023**

Hybrid Meeting:
ASHHO Cultural Community Center
5757 Littlerock Rd SW #4, Tumwater, WA 98512
Virtual meeting via ZOOM

Council members present:

Courtney Cecale (Alternate)	DoQuyen Huynh	Victor Rodriguez
Benjamin Danielson	Nicole Johnson	María Sigüenza
Michelle Davis (Alternate)	Diane Klontz	Greg Williamson
Lydia Faitalia	Millie Piazza	JanMarie Ward (Alternate)
Renee Fullerton	Elizabeth Perez (Alternate)	

Council members absent:

Willie Frank	Lena Nachand (Alternate)
Sara Franklin-Phillips	Leah Wainman
Stephen Kutz	Jessica Zinda
Kelly McLain (Alternate)	

Staff present:

Anna Burns, Communications Specialist	Jo-Ann Huynh, Administrative Assistant
Miranda Calmjoy, Policy Analyst	LinhPhụng Huỳnh, Council Manager
Grace Cohen, Council Fellow	Cait Lang-Perez, Policy Analyst
Melanie Hisaw, Executive Assistant	Michelle Larson, Communications Manager
Lindsay Herendeen, Policy Analyst	

Additional participants

Tobi Hill-Meyer, WA State LGBTQ Commission

During the virtual meeting, approximately 11 members of the public joined. The Council thanks everyone who took time to join, listen in, and share their personal experiences and perspectives during the meeting.

Ben Danielson, Council Chair, called the public meeting to order at 9:09 a.m. and shared welcoming remarks.

Khurshida Begum, Director of the ASHHO Cultural Community Center, introduced herself and provided a history of ASHHO. She discussed her efforts as an advocate for survivors and for Black and Brown communities. She said that ASHHO is a space to share joy, to have difficult conversations, and to challenge each other. She encouraged participants to step out of their comfort and be brave because that is what creates change. In sharing the

names of the meeting rooms at ASHHO, she said “Survivor” relates to how we are all survivors of something (trauma, health issues, etc.). For “Freedom,” Khurshida encouraged participants to think about health disparities and who we need to provide access and opportunity to—to think about who has freedom and who does not currently. She said, “Our health is our wellness. ASHHO is sharing with community about how they can take care of their health and wellness.”

Chair Danielson thanked Khurshida and said it is inspiring to be at ASHHO. He then read from a prepared statement (on file).

Victor Rodriguez, Council Vice Chair, introduced himself and shared the [Foundational Truths](#) of the Council redesign project. He affirmed the inherent power of community in the face of crisis, saying that community comes together and creates bonds that help each other survive during difficult times. He then gave examples of the mutual aid efforts in response to the Hawaii fires in early August 2023 and the recent court case *Held v. Montana*, where Montana youth won a landmark decision affirming environmental rights.

Chair Danielson invited participants to introduce themselves and to respond to the following prompt: *Share a moment when you were brave.*

Participants’ responses included:

- Supporting elderly parents who tested positive for COVID-19.
- Advocating for the LGBTQ+ community as a trans woman.
- Being targeted by a hate group.
- Being a Brown woman in society. “Being a minority, it takes an amount of bravery just for existing.”
- Working in public health during the COVID-19 pandemic.
- “People continue to do work under a close microscope and under threat. It deepens my respect for people who choose to serve the public.”
- Working with the Poverty Reduction Work Group and the steering committee of folks with lived experience.
- Being a parent’s primary hospice care provider while working and having a family.
- Stepping up into leadership positions and holding beliefs contrary to the status quo.
- “Bravery is born out of necessity when doing equity work. There’s not an alternative that I’m comfortable with.”
- Living as a Black queer immigrant living with HIV and advocating for oneself in health care spaces. Surviving racism in health care, when going to buy food at a store, when applying for a job, etc. “Being outspoken about my experience while I’m fighting for my liberation. It’s about fighting for everyone’s liberation, so no one has to go through what I have to go through.”
- Honoring and continuing the work of one’s ancestors.
- Reaching out to a neighbor after an escalated dispute. Resolving an issue when it is uncomfortable and not resorting to tactics rooted in fear.
- Changing a conference speech at the last minute to discuss a more difficult topic affecting refugees and immigrants in the health care system.

- “Figuring out how to exist in a new space when you’ve never had to do it before. Sometimes you find yourself in a moment that is different and it’s not bad, just different.”
- Sharing a chronic illness diagnosis publicly for the first time.
- Advocating on behalf of clients to supervisors who support the status quo.
- Learning and speaking about a suppressed cultural heritage.
- One participant shared about her lineage from the Paiute people, who established the original towns in present-day Santa Barbara. She shared a story about her great-grandfather, who was at the Presidio when it was taken during the Mexican-American war. American soldiers asked her great-grandfather to climb the pole and hang the American flag, which led to him falling to his death. She discussed the concept of seven generations and holding her ancestors’ stories as part of her own. She said that it takes bravery and being bold to teach hope and speak the truth, such as the story of her great-grandfather, and speak the words of personal experiences.
- Having to make decisions for a partner during a difficult birthing process.
- Acting as an interpreter for parents with limited English proficiency and helping parents navigate government systems to get resources.
- Continuing to call agencies like the Department of Social and Health Services, Social Security, and Health Care Authority despite bad experiences with customer and interpretive services.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA—Possible Action

Motion: [Approve August 23, 2023 agenda](#)

Motion/Second: [Huynh/Faitalia](#). Approved unanimously.

2. Approval of Minutes—Possible Action

Motion: [Approve May 10, 2023 minutes](#).

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

To maintain the designated public comment time, agenda item #3 (Announcements, Council Business, and Member Updates) was omitted from the agenda.

4. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

There was no verbal public comment at this meeting. Written public comment is available [online](#).

The Council took a break at 10:53 a.m. and reconvened at 11:04 a.m.

5. PRESENTATION & DISCUSSION: HEALTH IMPACT REVIEW (HIR) UPDATE FOR FISCAL YEAR 2023

Cait Lang-Perez, Miranda Calmjoy, and Lindsay Herendeen, Health Policy Analysts, presented an update on the Health Impact Review (HIR) program, providing a brief overview of the HIR process, an update of HIR requests from the 2023 fiscal year, and a summary of ongoing projects (presentation on file). They shared that they are creating an outreach toolkit that members of the Health Disparities Council and the State Board of Health can use when sharing information about HIRs externally.

DoQuyen Huynh, Council Member (Health Care Authority), shared that her agency has a similar toolkit used internally for legislative action and bill analysis. She offered to share the toolkit for reference. Greg Williamson, Council Member (Department of Children, Youth, and Families), said that the increase in HIR requests outside the scope of traditional health topics may be due to the quality and usefulness of the HIR team's work. He said that a video version of their presentation would be a great tool to share with partners. He also suggested creating a tip sheet for agency partners on how to best connect the HIR team with key informants, especially during legislative session. Chair Danielson said that, considering the social focus of recent HIR topics, the team might consider expanding their focus from health equity to equity impacts in general.

Millie Piazza, Council Member (Department of Ecology), brought up difficulties in designing Environmental Justice (EJ) assessments as implementation continues for the Healthy Environment for All (HEAL) Act. She asked the HIR team about their strength of evidence spectrum, where on this spectrum the evidence for their reviews tends to fall, and how strength of evidence may correlate with usefulness for their reviews. Lindsay said that she is involved with the group designing EJ assessments and has been able to share the HIR team's methods with the group. Miranda shared that every HIR has a logic model, and each individual step has its own strength of evidence. They shared that while the team has not been able to conduct an analysis correlating strength of evidence to usefulness, there is at least one example of a bill being amended to increase equity after an HIR showed that the original provisions would decrease equity.

Chair Danielson shared appreciation that the team considers lived experience as a part of strength of evidence. He said he hopes to see strength of community as a part of the reviews one day. María Sigüenza, Council Member (Commission on Hispanic Affairs), shared ideas for promoting understanding of the HIR request process. She said that in general, one-pagers are helpful for sharing materials, and that the team might consider developing different materials for agency members and for community audiences. She also suggested developing accessible materials for youth.

Lydia Faitalia, Council Member (Commission on Asia Pacific American Affairs), spoke about the Council's power to encourage the Governor to request HIRs. She said that considering the importance of housing as a social determinant of health, only two percent of recent HIR requests were about housing. She encouraged the Council to

ground its work in the social determinants of health and to make our work relevant to communities.

6. COUNCIL REDESIGN WORKSHOP

Vice Chair Rodriguez gave a brief overview of the Council statute redesign process so far. He invited Council members and participants to share their thoughts and reflections on the current draft statute language (on file).

LinhPhung Huynh, Council Manager, gave a presentation about the progress of the redesign project and shared lessons from Council staff's summer community engagement activities (presentation on file). Linh invited everyone to share their learnings and reflections.

Council Member Piazza shared that she participated in a session online. She spoke about how well attended the meeting was and how folks were so ready to share. She said it reminded her that community is already taking action and that they are waiting for government to do the same.

Council Member Huynh shared reflections from the meeting she attended in Yakima. She said that most participants had never heard of the Council. She discussed the need for additional staff capacity to improve communication with community. She shared that a participant, who had previously attended Council meetings, said that Council members did not appear fully engaged or effective. She reflected on her own struggles with being fully engaged due to time and capacity constraints. She suggested that members from cabinet agencies need to discuss ways to be as effective as possible.

Renee Fullerton, Council Member (Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board Workforce Board), shared about attending four meetings, two virtually and two in-person in Yakima. She reflected that it is a challenge for government agencies to engage meaningfully on a statewide level and that many communities do not know about groups like the Council or the Poverty Reduction Work Group. She shared that the Central Washington participants appreciated the in-person visits and complimented staff's organization of the meetings. She said it is now Council members' responsibility to incorporate the learnings.

Jo-Ann Huynh, Council Staff, shared her experience in planning and attending the events. She said that community members were very willing to share their experiences and connect with their government, and that the trip helped her realize the potential of an interagency council working on health equity. She shared a learning from the trip, which was the need for government to "prepare the table" for community, and discussed the difficulty she experienced trying to do this while navigating governmental policies. She connected this idea to the need for additional staff capacity as the Council currently has only one dedicated staff member. She encouraged Council members to read the Road Trip Summary (on file) and to make use of the learnings.

Grace Cohen, Council Staff, said their biggest takeaway was around time. They said that almost every group discussed how government operates on tight timelines when it comes to community-facing efforts, whether it comes to grants or gathering information. Grace said that community members asked agencies to put in the work and time to build trust, attend community events, and create connections beyond timeline-based engagement. They reflected on the staff capacity needed to build ongoing relationships that community is asking for.

Michelle Davis, Council Member (State Board of Health), spoke about implementing language access. She said the State Board of Health received Foundational Public Health Systems (FPHS) funding that allowed for language interpretation and translation for two meetings during the summer engagement activities. She said this funding allowed the Board to hire a Community Engagement Coordinator, who used her Spanish language skills during the Council's engagement events. Council Member Davis then shared a learning from Linh—that while having interpretation and translation is a great baseline, having a bilingual staff member facilitated more authentic connection with community members. She connected this to the idea of “setting the table” and said that agencies should also lead with their best foot when entering the room. She said that there is so much more to be done moving forward and that this is an whole-government need.

JanMarie Ward, Council Member (American Indian Health Commission), shared her experience working with higher education and state agencies. She shared that during the economic downturn, agencies were asked, “What is the core business of the agency?” and that the answer was not diversity. She said that to serve people, agencies need to understand their populations’ “true histories,” otherwise they will not be able to address the root causes of current inequities. She said that the skills to understand these histories lie in the humanities rather than science or public health, and that these skills are foundational rather than soft skills. She thanked Council Member Davis for using FPHS funding to provide language access. She said the business of agencies needs to be serving human beings and sustaining life.

Elizabeth Perez, Council Member (Department of Health), reflected on the ideas of liberating practices and concrete actions. She spoke about the barriers within agency systems that make it difficult to take on equity initiatives and the need to reexamine these systems internally. She said that language access is not something that agencies should have to compromise on, but that there is not always the funding to cover it. Council Member Williamson agreed with Council Member Perez and reaffirmed that agencies receiving federal funding are mandated to provide language access. He said the Council's member agencies need to think about how to get funding for these “low hanging fruit” initiatives and also consider the Council's role in demanding the dollars. Linh said that some community partners have shared that language access is not enough—agencies must move toward language justice.

Diane Klontz, Council Member (Department of Commerce), referred back to Council Member Williamson and Council Member Fatalia's comments about housing. She said

that in 2022, Washington state distributed 61,500 vouchers and only 56,300 of them were used. She spoke about the lack of adequate housing supply and supplemental support programs and highlighted the need for more housing.

Vice Chair Rodriguez transitioned the group to the lunch period. He asked Council members and participants to consider over lunch: “How do the statute revisions change how we operate, our partnerships, and collective impact?”

The Council took a lunch break at 12:46 p.m. and reconvened at 1:26 p.m.

6. COUNCIL REDESIGN WORK (CONTINUED)

Vice Chair Rodriguez welcomed everyone back from lunch and invited Linh to share about the progress on the Council’s statutory recommendations. Linh provided an overview of the key changes to the draft statute (on file) since the Council’s May 2023 meeting.

Council Members Sigüenza, Ward, and Fullerton, Chair Danielson, and Vice Chair Rodriguez provided feedback around mentioning the COVID-19 pandemic in the statute language (Section 1). They deliberated over the need to acknowledge the impact of the pandemic versus the possibility of creating outdated language. Council Member Fullerton suggested keeping the acknowledgement of the pandemic and to note its impact for generations ahead.

Council Members Williamson, Davis, Fullerton, Huynh, and Faitalia, Vice Chair Rodriguez, and Tobi Hill-Meyer, LGBTQ Commission Member, provided feedback around council membership (Section 2). They discussed including youth representatives and using pro tempore membership to expand representation. Linh discussed the need for additional staff to support a larger membership.

Nicole Johnson, Council Member (Department of Agriculture), and fellow Council Members Williamson, Fullerton, and Ward provided feedback regarding the roles and responsibilities of state agencies (Section 2, Subsection 5a). They discussed language around how agency representatives are appointed to the Council and how agency authority might be delegated. Council Member Johnson recommended reviewing language in the HEAL Act referring to Ex Officio members.

Council Members Williamson and Sigüenza and Vice Chair Rodriguez provided feedback on naming specific groups the Council might collaborate with (Section 3, Subsection 4).

Council Members Sigüenza, Piazza, Ward, Williamson, Faitalia, Huynh, and Perez, Vice Chair Rodriguez, and Commissioner Hill-Meyer provided feedback on the relationship between the Council and state agencies, specifically discussing the use of the word “cooperate” (Section 3, Subsection 6).

The Council took a break at 3:01 p.m. and reconvened at 3:08 p.m.

6. COUNCIL REDESIGN WORKSHOP (CONTINUED)

Vice Chair Rodriguez asked Council Members to return to specific areas of draft statute (on file) they felt needed further revision before seeking agency approval.

Council Members Perez, Huynh, Piazza, Johnson, Williamson, Sigüenza, and Davis, Vice Chair Rodriguez, and Commissioner Hill-Meyer provided further feedback on the language of Section 3, Subsection 6, as well as to the whole of Section 3 regarding expectations of state agencies, accountability, and potential fiscal notes.

Council Member Ward asked about the change to no longer have the Governor appoint a Council Chair. Linh shared feedback from community regarding Governor appointments. Council Member Ward, Vice Chair Rodriguez, and Linh discussed the challenges and benefits of Governor-appointed roles. Council Member Ward said that she recommended the statute revert to the Chair being the Governor or Governor's appointee.

Council Members Williamson, Davis, Klontz, Piazza, Sigüenza, and Johnson confirmed their agencies are comfortable supporting the proposed statutory changes, understanding there will be some additional changes to the draft statute language.

Council Members Piazza and Davis noted the proposed name change to "Health Equity and Justice Council." Member Piazza said the Legislature may see the Council as redundant with the Environmental Justice Council with use of the word "justice." She also advocated for the inclusion of metrics in the statute language. Chair Danielson reflected on the relationship between metrics and accountability, especially with regards to whom the Council is accountable.

Council Member Fullerton shared that her agency's legislative director recommended the specific inclusion of veterans in the draft statute. Council Member Faitalia advocated for the statute language to state that the Council will request disaggregated data from agencies. Council Member Huynh shared concerns that there are currently no clear standards for disaggregation, and the two Council Members discussed the risks and benefits of data disaggregation. Council Member Faitalia noted for the record that the Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs is requesting the inclusion of disaggregated data in the statute language.

Commissioner Hill-Meyer suggested that Section 2, Subsection 5, include gender identity in addition to gender, to ensure inclusion of transgender and nonbinary individuals. Chair Danielson and Council Members Davis, Williamson, Ward, and Huynh

returned to the discussion of appointment of a Council Chair and whether that needs to be defined in statute.

Linh discussed possible next steps. She said that since the Council's next public meeting is not until September 14, the Council is unable to take a vote on the final legislative and budgetary proposals before placeholder packages are due to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and Governor's Office (September 13).

Linh shared a list of resources needed to improve operations and implement the Council's redesign, including additional staff positions as well as funding for meetings and convenings, language assistance services, and community compensation. She said the Council would be asking for a significant investment in its work and health equity in the state. Council Member Davis recommended including costs for Assistant Attorney General support in the budget. Council Member Piazza asked about the Council's proposed reporting requirements and recommended including technology needs. Council Member Ward said that support for tribal relations should be included in the budget. Chair Danielson recommended including specific support for youth participation.

Council Members Huynh and Williamson reflected on the feasibility of the request for additional staff positions and asked for an estimated budget number. Linh provided context for potential staff roles and said she anticipated needing to hire 7 to 8 additional positions, which amounts to at least \$1 million per year just for staffing. She stated that the Council has not asked for additional funding since its creation in 2006 and has relied on staffing and resources primarily assigned to State Board of Health duties.

Council Members Williamson, Davis, and Faitalia expressed support for the proposed budget request.

Motion: The Council supports the proposed statutory updates, as reflected in the August 16, 2023 draft (with revisions incorporated today). Council members commit to sharing the proposed updates with their agency or organization for final feedback, so members can consider voting on a final legislative proposal at the Council's September 14, 2023 public meeting. In the meantime, the Council directs staff to work with the Council Chair and Redesign Leads to submit placeholder agency request legislation and a decision package to OFM and the Governor's Office by the state enterprise deadline (i.e., September 13, 2023). The Council encourages staff to consult the Council's Assistant Attorney General (AAG) and authorizes staff to make needed revisions to proposed statute based on the AAG's advice.

Motion/Second: Williamson/Ward. Approved unanimously.

7. COMMENTS, FEEDBACK, AND REFLECTIONS

Linh shared next steps. She said she will incorporate revisions from today and share an updated version of draft statute with Council Members by September 1, and would need agency feedback by September 6. After that, staff will submit placeholder packages for the request legislation and budgetary proposal with OFM and the Governor's Office by the September 13 deadline.

Vice Chair Rodriguez expressed gratitude, in particular thanking staff for their work over the past few months, especially with the summer engagement activities, meeting with agencies, and the statute redesign.

Chair Danielson expressed appreciation and stated that each step ahead gets clearer.

ADJOURNMENT

Victor Rodriguez, Council Vice Chair, adjourned the meeting at 4:40 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 the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities, at 360-236-4102 or by email at healthequity@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