



Final Minutes of the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities

September 14, 2023

Hybrid Meeting

Physical meeting at:

[Asia Pacific Cultural Center](#)

3513 E Portland Ave

Tacoma, WA 98404

Virtual meeting via ZOOM

Council members present:

Benjamin Danielson

Michelle Davis (Alternate)

Lydia Faitalia

Renee Fullerton

Jennifer Helseth

DoQuyen Huynh

Nicole Johnson

Diane Klontz

Stephen Kutz

Millie Piazza

Elizabeth Perez

Victor Rodriguez

María Sigüenza

Jessica Zinda

Council members absent:

Courtney Cecale (Alternate)

Willie Frank

Sara Franklin-Phillips

Kelly McLain (Alternate)

Lena Nachand (Alternate)

Kendrick Stewart (Alternate)

Greg Williamson

Leah Wainman

JanMarie Ward (Alternate)

Staff present:

Anna Burns, Communications Specialist

Miranda Calmjoy, Policy Analyst

Grace Cohen, Council Fellow

Melanie Hisaw, Board Executive Assistant

Lindsay Herendeen, Policy Analyst

Jo-Ann Huynh, Administrative Assistant

LinhPhụng Huỳnh, Council Manager

Michelle Larson, Communications

Manager

Additional participants

Tobi Hill-Meyer, WA State LGBTQ Commission

David Ortiz, Pacific Islander Health Board of Washington

During the virtual meeting, approximately 21 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 9:58 a.m. and shared welcoming remarks.

Faaluaina (Lua) Pritchard, Executive Director, Asia Pacific Cultural Center, welcomed the Council to the Asia Pacific Cultural Center (Center). She thanked everyone for coming and talked about the construction of the Center's new building, to be completed in June 2025.

Director Pritchard said that she served on the Council in past years and the Council holds a special place in her heart.

Chair Danielson commended the plans for the Center's new building. He then transitioned the Council to an icebreaker question about journeys. He quoted Angela Davis, saying, "I'm no longer tolerating the things I'm told that cannot be," and Albert Einstein, saying, "The definition of insanity is to continue to do the same thing and hope for change." He asked the Council and meeting participants to think about a meaningful journey in their lives.

Participants' responses included:

- Taking a 14-day canoe journey with other Tribal members.
- Organizing against two anti-trans initiatives and building a powerful network with trans community members despite facing fear and hate.
- Doing a challenging 7.5-mile hike and receiving encouragement from a stranger that gave her the passion to continue.
- The challenges of environmental justice and equity work since the uprisings related to George Floyd's murder.
- Caring for family through career changes, illness, pregnancy, and the pandemic.
- Working to reduce wage gaps.
- Being told she cannot change the world but working with the Commission for Hispanic Affairs to change the world for some individuals.
- Staying the course by looking for connection with other people, animals, plants, rocks, and places on the journey.
- Understanding others' journeys as a Vietnamese person, whose family's journey is woven with others through history. Learning how her family survived in desperate living situations.
- The journey of motherhood, the business of everyday life, and academia.
- Leading youth on a spiritual run but becoming so tired and almost not being able to finish. Calling out for help and feeling a surge of energy that helped him finish. Learning from needing help in a time of weakness and from the power of humility and belief.
- Struggling with math in junior high school. His father, a Marine in the American War in Vietnam, sent him tape recordings from pilots on his base telling him how to do math. Being amazed that strangers sent him tape recordings for weeks, helping him with math topics such as geometry.
- Navigating medical systems and recruiting the help of advocates to get treatment for severe medical issues.
- Being told in academia that systems can't be changed, only written about. Working in direct service with people experiencing homelessness and mental health issues and with the Council helped them stay the path.
- Working in healthcare and getting burnt out trying to bring awareness of social issues after George Floyd's murder. Staying on the path by stepping out when she needed to and stepping back in when she was in a better place.

Chair Danielson thanked the ASL and Spanish language interpreters as well as staff and attendees for being at the meeting.

1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA—Possible Action

Motion: [Approve September 14, 2023 agenda](#)

Motion/Second: Klontz/Johnson. Approved unanimously.

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES—Possible Action

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

Motion/Second: Johnson/Faitalia. Approved unanimously.

Lydia Faitalia, Council Member (Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs – CAPAA), asked whether the August minutes reflected CAPAA’s request for the Council’s statute to include language on data disaggregation. Linh confirmed that this point was captured and referred Member Faitalia to its place in the minutes. Member Faitalia reviewed the minutes and confirmed that they were acceptable.

Tobi Hill-Meyer, LGBTQ Commission, asked if she counted as a Council Member when it came to votes or quorum and said her name was not recorded in the August minutes as a participant. LinhPhung Huynh, Council Manager, said while the Council’s redesign proposal recommends adding the LGBTQ Commission as a Council member, under the current statute, Commissioner Hill-Meyer cannot formally vote or be considered part of quorum. Linh said it was an oversight not to include Commissioner Hill-Meyer’s name at the top of the document and it could be added under “Additional participants” in the final minutes. Linh said that Commissioner Hill-Meyer’s name and contributions were acknowledged throughout the minutes.

The Council took a break at 11:14 a.m. and reconvened at 11:30 a.m.

3. COUNCIL REDESIGN WORKSHOP—POSSIBLE ACTION

Victor Rodriguez, Council Vice Chair and Redesign Co-Lead, introduced the section and commended Council Members on the statute redesign so far. Linh referred Council Members to the proposed motion and gave an overview of redesign materials (on file), including a draft request legislation package and budget decision package.

Chair Danielson said that it was incredible this work was done with only 1 full-time equivalent (FTE) staff person for the Council. María Sigüenza, Council Member (Commission on Hispanic Affairs – CHA), echoed Chair Danielson’s statement and said CHA is excited to see this change. She said it has been a long time coming and hopes the Council receives its requested funding and statutory changes.

Council members and additional meeting participants discussed [draft statutory language](#) (on file), which describes draft recommended changes to the Council’s name, structure and membership, and responsibilities.

Focus areas included:

- Whether reference to “Tribes” should be framed as “Federally Recognized Tribes.” Steve Kutz, Council Member (State Board of Health – Board), clarified that federal recognition is a distinction relevant primarily to the U.S. government, and that it is not necessarily relevant to how Tribal governments interact with Indigenous people. Commissioner Hill-Meyer said that within that part of the proposed statute, Tribes are discussed in the context of recognizing racism and harmful policies. She said it is important to recognize that all Tribes have been impacted by this, and those not federally recognized maybe even more so. Council Member Siquenza said she appreciated the use of more inclusive language when discussing Tribes. She said that CHA is hoping to disaggregate their demographic data to show Indigenous community members and affirmed the importance of pan-Indigeneity and Indigeneity. She said that Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA) should continue to be a part of the Council’s work, and that moving forward, the Council should be intentional in including Tribes that do not have federal recognition.
- Raising the cut-off age for youth representatives from 25 years to 26 years and adding that youth representatives who age out of their positions may be appointed as a successor and may finish their terms as a Council member in a community member or pro tempore seat (Section 2, Subsection 5c).
- Decentering English by using a term such as “speakers of a language other than English” instead of “English language learners.”
- Revising the term “marginalized communities” to read “marginalized populations.”
- More explicitly linking the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic to racism.
- Clarifying “health and wellbeing of all beings” to either state “human health and wellbeing” or simply “health and wellbeing.”
- The importance of language access. Council Member Faitalia said community members, including elders, should have the ability to join Council meetings and voice their own needs.
- The importance of funding for research capacity. Council Member Faitalia expressed that ethnic commissions would also like to see funding allocated for their commissions to have in-house research like the Health Impact Review (HIR) staff who assist with Council projects. Linh clarified that HIR staff are funded through the State Board of Health for the HIR program and assist the Council only when they are able to. Linh added that the Council’s draft proposal includes a request for year-round research support in the form of new staff positions: two policy analysts and one epidemiologist.

- Ensuring that community partners and ethnic commissions are involved in participatory models, such as town halls. Council Member Fitalia said she hoped CAPAA’s community partners could engage and receive stipends for their time. Linh said the draft proposal requests four staff for Council community engagement efforts throughout the state as well as community compensation funding, and it would be important for the Council to collaborate with ethnic commissions on engagement. Vice Chair Rodriguez said that staff needs are beyond what is being requested and that the Council needs a clear strategy for community engagement.
- Clarifying the statement in Section 3, subsection 6 about state agency collaboration on Council requests.
- Deciding on a new Council name to recommend and include in the proposal.

Chair Danielson paused the discussion to honor the scheduled public comment period.

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 one signed up for public comment.

3. COUNCIL REDESIGN WORKSHOP—POSSIBLE ACTION (CONTINUED)

Council members and additional meeting participants continued discussing [draft statutory language](#) (on file). Additional focus areas included:

- Whether “climate change” should be expressly stated in the draft statute or if it should be implied under the term “public health threats” (line 25). David Ortiz, public participant (Pacific Islander Health Board of Washington), suggested naming climate change explicitly. Council Member Kutz said the impacts of climate change disproportionately affect marginalized people and cited examples of flooding, extreme heath, and pollution. No Council members objected to stating “climate change” explicitly in the draft statute.
- How the Council Chair(s) should be selected in the future. Members discussed the distinction and significance a Governor-designated Chair position carries when interacting with Tribes and Tribal members. Council Member Kutz proposed that the Council’s current practice (i.e., a Chair designated by the Governor and a Vice Chair elected by the Council) remain the same in the proposed statute. Millie Piazza, Council Member (Department of Ecology), shared concerns around Chair appointments being restricted to existing Council membership.

Before moving to lunch, Chair Danielson asked Council Members and additional participants to share how they felt about the current draft language on a scale of 1 (not ready to act) to 5 (ready to act). Participants indicated many 4s and some 5s.

The Council took a lunch break at 12:50 p.m. and reconvened at 1:34 p.m.

5. COUNCIL REDESIGN WORKSHOP (CONTINUED)

Jessica Zinda, Council Member (Department of Social and Health Services - DSHS) and Redesign Co-Lead, announced that the Council was transitioning back to discussing the statute redesign. Continued discussion on [draft statutory language](#) (on file) focused on:

- How the Council Chair(s) should be selected in the future. Some Council Members expressed concern that selecting co-chairs only from among Council membership would be limiting. Nicole Johnson, Council Member (Department of Agriculture), and Council Member Kutz spoke in favor of having a Governor-appointed Chair and a Council-elected Co-Chair. Council Member Sigüenza spoke in favor of having Co-Chairs chosen from community representatives. Council Member Faitalia spoke in favor of having a Governor-appointed Chair. However, she said that if the Governor appoints both the Chair and Co-Chair, there may be a loss of voice reflecting community and organizations currently at the table. Council Member Piazza suggested stating that the Governor shall appoint Co-Chairs with expertise or experience with health equity, that one Co-Chair must be appointed from among the Council Members representing the statutory commissions or the community, and the Governor shall consider nominations or recommendations from the Council.
- A timeframe for Chair appointments. Elizabeth Perez, Council Member (Department of Health), asked whether proposed statutory language should include a timeframe for the Governor's Office to act on appointments, e.g., 30 to 45 days after the Council provides recommendations, which could support continuity of work. Council Member Kutz said it may take more than 45 days to find the right person and that he would not want the Governor's Office to rush through a decision. Michelle Davis, Council Member (State Board of Health), said that from experience working with the State Board of Health and the Council, the Council cannot necessarily hold the Governor's Office to that type of timeline. Linh stated that currently, the Council may not meet frequently enough to vet candidates and to make recommendations within a 45-day timeline. Renee Fullerton, Council Member (Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board), said that she has seen appointment processes go on for longer than a year and suggested a longer timeline, e.g., 180 days.
- Proposed reporting deadlines in Section 3, subsection 5. Council Member Fullerton stated that January 15 is a difficult time for a report to be due because

of holidays and Legislative Session. She suggested a summer deadline to allow agencies and legislators to consider policy direction. Council Member Piazza said that the state budget biennium provides a good timeline for the report since it falls in June, and agencies are already reviewing what they did the previous year and considering potential legislation. Council Members Zinda and Johnson spoke in favor of this timeline. Council Members Zinda and Davis discussed which years the report should go out. Council Member Davis said that the report could go out during June of an even number year, which is a short session ahead of a policy decision year. She said that this would allow time for staff to get the report done and provide opportunity in the interim to share information with decision-makers, agencies, and the Governor's Office. Based on comments heard, Linh clarified that the proposed statute would be updated to show an initial report due date of June 30, 2030, and continuous reporting every 2 years with the first iteration due by June 30, 2032.

Participants had in-depth conversation about a new proposed name for the Council. Member Zinda shared her belief that the Council's statute redesign is groundbreaking, systems change, and justice-oriented work. She asked Council Members for their thoughts on including "Justice" in the Council's name.

Council Member Perez asked whether including "justice" in the Council's name might duplicate other groups' efforts and unintentionally cause some groups to be eliminated. Commissioner Hill-Meyer suggested that there may be multiple interpretations of justice and that it may be more clearly understood with an explanation in the Purpose section than included in the Council's name.

Council Member Piazza spoke in favor of including "justice" in the possible name change. She said that for decades, she pushed against the idea of 'environmental equity' because while equity is the pathway, the ultimate goal is justice. She said that the branding of "health equity and justice" is distinct and that this name change could provide new opportunities for alignment. Vice Chair Rodriguez shared a differing view, that justice is the pathway to equity. He noted that regardless of interpretation, the Council should be ready and able to explain why "justice" is included in our name.

Council Member Faitalia spoke in favor of "Health Equity and Justice." Chair Danielson asked whether a name change would have any implications for the Health Impact Review (HIR) team, and Lindsay Herendeen, Health Policy Analyst, replied that "health equity and justice" fit well for HIR work.

Chair Danielson and Council Member Kutz discussed concerns that scoping around health may limit the Council's work to topics like specific health indicators, rather than social determinants of health. Council Member Kutz said he wants the Council to do justice-related work. Council Member Faitalia said that in considering a new name, the Council should ask itself how this work will continue in five to seven years and where they are headed.

Participants suggested five potential names for the Council:

1. Governor's Council for Health Equity
2. Governor's Council for Health Equity and Justice
3. Governor's Council for Health Justice
4. Governor's Council for Equity and Justice in Health
5. Governor's Council for Health Justice and Equity

Participants took an informal vote on the name options and agreed on #5 (Governor's Council for Health Justice and Equity).

Motion: The Council approves the legislative and budgetary proposals, as drafted on September 7, 2023, and discussed and revised at today's meeting. The Council directs staff to work with Council leadership, Redesign Leads, Council members and their agencies, and additional partners to advance the proposals for the 2024 Legislative Session. The Council recognizes that specific language in the proposals may have evolved and may continue to evolve during the legislative process due to legal and technical considerations as well as guidance from OFM, the Governor's Office, and others. The Council encourages staff to adjust specific language in the request legislation and proposals as needed, while honoring the intent, foundational truths, and core concepts of the Council's redesign process, as much as feasible. As needed and whenever practicable, staff should reach out to individual Council members to share information and receive members' input and guidance.

Motion/Second: Zinda/Faitalia. Approved unanimously.

6. PUBLIC COMMENT

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

David Ortiz expressed appreciation to the Council for retaining "climate change" in the draft proposed statute.

The Council took a break at 3:12 p.m. and reconvened at 3:26 p.m.

7. COUNCIL REDESIGN WORKSHOP (CONTINUED)

Linh congratulated the Council on approving the statutory and fiscal proposals (i.e., request legislation package and decision package) and shared potential next steps in the legislative process. She said that things are not always clear, linear, or what we may expect. She stated that she will offer what she knows and asked members to share their knowledge and experience working with bills during legislative session. Linh shared several potential steps:

- Submit the proposals to the Office of Financial Management (OFM) and the Governor's Office. Review of the proposals may take 2 ½ to 3 months and there is no guarantee as to if/when the Governor's Office may approve the proposals until the Governor's Budget comes out in mid-December.

- Respond to questions and requests from OFM and the Governor’s Office.
- Anticipate the Governor’s Budget in mid-late December. This may leave little time before the next Council Meeting, so Council Members may need to continue conversations in December without much clarity on the Budget.
- Speak with various partners to align priorities and commitment. Linh encouraged Council Members to share the Council’s statute redesign in forums they are a part of.
- Speak to legislators about redesign concepts.
- Get legislative sponsors for request legislation.
- Update the Council’s Statewide Action Plan to include redesign recommendations. Linh said she will share a draft for review and feedback ahead of the December Council meeting.
- Prepare legislative testimony, bill language, and updated fiscal notes.
- Participate in the 2024 Legislative Session. If the Council’s proposals make it into the Governor’s Budget, cabinet agencies would be able to fully support and help advance the proposals.

Council Member Johnson suggested drafting summaries for all Council Members to use when speaking with their agencies. Council Member Zinda said that for the next part of the meeting, she would like Council Members to start building those talking points by answering the questions, “What will change for our state?” and “What is the cost of keeping things the same?”

What will change for our state if this proposal moves forward?

- Council Member Zinda said that the Council’s statute would be more inclusive, and more Washingtonians would see themselves in the statute. She said that people would know that we are focusing on health and wellbeing as a state.
- Chair Danielson stated this could be a building block for doing anti-racist work and working toward focusing on wellness instead of illness.
- Council Member Piazza said that, should the proposed statute pass in its entirety, it would be a demonstrated, resourced commitment to health justice and equity. She said that we resource what we care about.
- Council Member Fullerton stated it would create a cross-agency platform for public voice with the ability to advise policy makers about the best actions to take to advance equity. She said it would be independent of silos and single-entity agendas.
- Linh said that one of the biggest requests from the Council’s community engagement meetings in Eastern and Central Washington was to know what the Council is and how it connects to people in the state. She said that if the statute passed in its entirety, the Council could work towards providing that transparency.

- Council Members Johnson and Zinda discussed what would happen if the bill passed in its entirety, but the decision package (funding request) does not. Council Member Johnson said that members should have a note about funding in their talking points. Council Member Davis agreed that funding is essential for the Council to carry out its work.
- Chair Danielson stated it is always harder to come back financially after not acting in advance.
- Council Member Perez said the proposed statute provides a framework for the Council's growth, how it should do work, and impact people in a way that the current statute does not.
- David Ortiz (PI Health Board) stated that, from a community standpoint, the proposed statute would better position the state to address climate anxiety/grief and impacts to youth head on.
- Commissioner Hill-Meyer stated that the statute would expand representation and voice. For example, the LGBTQ Commission would be an actual member of the Council.

What is the cost of keeping things the same if this proposal does not move forward?

- Chair Danielson said that we will lose good people since this work is exhausting when it is under-resourced.
- Council Member Kutz spoke about the effort put into the Council over the years. He stated that Council Member Davis and Board staff have especially made the Council's work a priority.
- Council Member Fullerton said that the Council would continue to miss opportunities to make needed systemic changes.
- Linh considered the possibility that the Council could be provided increased resources but be required to keep its current statute until the following legislative session (i.e., long session), when larger policy changes are considered. She asked about the cost of continuing to operate under the existing statute. Council Member Zinda replied that the Council is not meeting its current challenges or optimizing its potential.
- Grace Cohen, Council Fellow, offered a learning from the Council's community engagement meetings, that a potential cost could be eroding trust built with community partners.
- Commissioner Hill-Meyer followed up on Chair Danielson's comment about potentially losing good people. She stated that people die when we do not have an impact on policy that we want to and when we cannot address health inequities in communities. She shared that people in her community have died because of bad government policies, and that is a potential if the proposal does not pass.

- Council Member Piazza reiterated David Ortiz’s (PI Health Board) and Commissioner Hill-Meyer’s points that the potential losses are irreplaceable, and there is no recovery or cost that can undo the losses. She said that this proposal is about accountability and giving the Council the resources to do that work.
- Chair Danielson added that there are risks beyond death. He said that the greatest purveyor of mental health services in our society is the prison system and spoke about the potential for culture to be erased. He said that this concerned him as a pediatrician.
- Council Member Kutz spoke about how many people on the Council have been doing this work their whole lives and about how this work extends inter-generationally. He said that there are many things that our government could do more quickly, and it is discouraging to do change work while business goes on as usual. He spoke about the loss of life in Indian Country and about the opioid epidemic affecting many communities. He said that the Council’s work is invaluable and that he does this work believing that we are making a difference, like the people on the Council before us. He said the Council could have as its mantra, “We refuse to give up,” and that can keep us all going.

Chair Danielson spoke about the power of those words and the perseverance in them. He stated that this redesign is a rare opportunity to be architects of our own future, and that he looks forward to continuing to struggle, try, and cry through this work.

8. ANNOUNCEMENTS, FEEDBACK, and REFLECTIONS

No additional comments.

ADJOURNMENT

Benjamin Danielson, Council Vice Chair, adjourned the meeting at 4:05 p.m.

GOVERNOR’S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES

Benjamin Danielson, Chair

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