



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

**December 14, 2023**

Hybrid Meeting

Physical meeting at:

[Tukwila Community Center](#)

12424 42<sup>nd</sup> Ave S

Tukwila, WA 98168

Virtual meeting via Zoom

**Council members present:**

Courtney Cecale (Alternate)

Jennifer Cole (Alternate)

Michelle Davis (Alternate)

Lydia Faitalia

Renee Fullerton

Jennifer Helseth (Alternate)

Jessica Hernandez

DoQuyen Huynh

Nicole Johnson

Elizabeth Perez

Victor Rodriguez

María Sigüenza (Alternate)

JanMarie Ward (Alternate)

Jessica Zinda

**Council members absent:**

Benjamin Danielson

Willie Frank

Diane Klontz

Lena Nachand (Alternate)

Greg Williamson

Leah Wainman

Sara Franklin-Phillips

Stephen Kutz

Kelly McLain (Alternate)

Millie Piazza

**Staff present:**

Anna Burns, Communications Specialist

Miranda Calmjoy, Policy Analyst

Lindsay Herendeen, Policy Analyst

Melanie Hisaw, Executive Assistant

Jo-Ann Huynh, Administrative Assistant

LinhPhụng Huỳnh, Council Manager

Michelle Larson, Communications Manager

**Additional participants**

Andrew Ashiofu

Ashley Bell, WA State Board of Health

Hawa Elias

Nina Helpling, WA State Department of Health

Tobi Hill-Meyer, WA State LGBTQ Commission

Maggie Konstantski

Joe Laxson, WA State Department of Health

Megan Matthews, WA State Office of Equity

Soleil Muñiz, WA State Department of Health

David Ortiz, Pacific Islander Health Board

Joana Ramos, WA State Coalition for Language Access

Scot Sternberg

Sophie Walker

During the virtual meeting, approximately 18 members of the public joined and 2 people participated in the formal Public Comment period. The Council thanks everyone who took time to join, listen in, and share their experiences and perspectives during the meeting.

Victor Rodriguez, Council Vice Chair, called the public meeting to order at 10:50 a.m. and shared welcoming remarks. Participants introduced themselves and responded to the prompt: “Compromise is needed in various parts of life and work, but what is something you won’t compromise?”

Some responses included:

- One’s personal dignity when feeling pressure to conform in the workplace.
- Seeing people’s humanity in day-to-day work.
- Dignity, safety, and keeping one’s heart and mind open to new voices and influences.
- Hearing how policies affect people.
- The long game of equity work.
- Being curious and asking why, rather than accepting conventional wisdom.
- Being authentic and having mutual respect.
- Centering community in our work.
- Calling things out that create oppression and breaking down oppressions experienced by marginalized communities.
- Driving quality improvement for health equity and social determinants of health.
- Slowing down. State government moves at a speed where they do not get to slow down to hear from people.
- Real systems policy change and intentionality.
- Ensuring that everyone has equitable access to full communication for all essential services.
- Not compromising oneself or one’s community.
- Spending time with family.
- Doing the right thing.
- The right to exist and cultural and linguistic heritage.
- Time for self-care, healing, and restoration.
- Protecting children: “All children should have the ability to thrive and live their best lives.”
- Commitment to learning and unlearning. Challenging oneself to think more deeply about the boxes people have been put in.
- Values of equity at work, especially with the approaching Legislative Session.

## **1. APPROVAL OF AGENDA—POSSIBLE ACTION**

**Motion:** [Approve December 14, 2023 agenda.](#)

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

## **2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES—POSSIBLE ACTION**

**Motion:** [Approve September 14, 2023 minutes.](#)

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

### 3. 2024 PUBLIC MEETING SCHEDULE—POSSIBLE ACTION

Jo-Ann Huynh, Council staff, shared the proposed 2024 schedule for regular meetings. They noted that dates for possible workshops, community forums, and additional events are not included in this list of regular meetings.

Council Members discussed the proposed schedule and approved the following 2024 regular meeting schedule:

- Tuesday, January 30, 2024
- Wednesday, September 18, 2024
- Thursday, December 12, 2024

Maria Sigüenza, Council Member (Commission on Hispanic Affairs - CHA), suggested that the Council meet in the Skagit Valley/Whatcom County area. Jessica Hernandez, Council Member (CHA), offered to provide help finding a meeting location on the Olympic Peninsula. Renee Fullerton, Council Member (Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board), suggested planning a meeting for east of the Cascade Mountains.

**Motion:** The Council approves the 2024 regular meeting schedule.

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

The Council took a break at 11:40 a.m. and reconvened at 11:50 a.m.

Vice Chair Rodriguez asked the Council to elect a Chair Pro Tempore to preside over the afternoon portion of the meeting when both he and Chair Benjamin Danielson would be absent from the meeting.

**Motion:** Elect Council member Jessica Zinda to serve as Chair Pro Tempore when Vice Chair Rodriguez leaves today's meeting.

**Motion/Second:** Member Faitalia/Member Ward. Approved unanimously.

### 5. PUBLIC COMMENT

Vice Chair Rodriguez said the Council would transition to the public comment period to be consistent with the time listed on the meeting agenda. He read from a prepared statement (on file).

David Ortiz, Pacific Islander Health Board, commented on the Council's request legislation (z-draft on file). David suggested that the Council link the portion about climate change to assessment tools, including framing for adaption, mitigation, and resilience.

Scot Sternberg, Community Member, shared appreciation for the openness of the meeting. Scot said that as a community member and healthcare professional, Scot

hopes the Council can follow in the words of Vice Chair Rodriguez: to be bold and to take action in the coming year. Vice Chair Rodriguez affirmed this statement.

#### **4. UPDATES: COUNCIL REDESIGN PROPOSAL**

Vice Chair Rodriguez and Jessica Zinda, Council Member (Department of Social and Health Services) and Redesign Co-Lead, transitioned the discussion to the Council's redesign project.

Member Zinda gave an overview of the Council's redesign process and said the goal is to move forward with a statutory and budgetary proposal (i.e., request legislation and decision package) this upcoming legislative session. Vice Chair Rodriguez reiterated the goals of the redesign and said that some compromise may be necessary as the Council's request legislation goes through the formal review process. He then reviewed the foundational truths.

LinhPhung Huynh, Council Manager, gave an update on the Council's request legislation (Z-0403.6) and decision package (funding request), including changes made based on suggestions from the Governor's Office and the Office of Financial Management during the formal review process (see presentation and additional documents on file).

Scot Sternberg, Community Member, asked whether components related to community engagement were still included in the revised funding request. Linh said yes, there are still multiple components that include opportunities for community voice. She said that the z-draft (request legislation) proposes: 7 community member seats on the Council, with two seats reserved for youth; authority to convene subcommittees, where there is broader opportunity for participation in policy development; and participatory methods. For the funding request, Linh noted that the Council is still requesting funds for community engagement staff, community compensation, and language assistance services in Council activities.

Regarding request legislation, Tobi Hill-Meyer, WA State LGBTQ Commission, asked whether the proposed pro tempore members would be in addition to the proposed 7 community member seats. Linh said that the pro tempore seats would be in addition, and any addition or removal of pro tempore members would not change the 7 seats reserved for community as stated in the request legislation.

Vice Chair Rodriguez asked whether Section 4 subsections (7)(e) and (7)(f), regarding the ability to independently endorse or comment on policy recommendations and positions of governmental and nongovernmental entities, are new and not part of the Council's current statute. Linh confirmed that these proposed items would be new, but that they had to be removed from request legislation at the suggestion of the Governor's Office due to the potential for creating an exceptional authority. Linh said there may be other ways to work through this, such as future communications with the Governor's Office.

Commissioner Hill-Meyer touched on the revised funding plan and asked how a phased approach would work. Linh said the Council could start with the \$1.1 million/year as outlined in the alternative plan and submit another decision package in the future. DoQuyen Huynh, Council Member (Health Care Authority), asked how these numbers relate to the Council's current budget. Linh replied that the Council's current budget only provides the salary for her position, 1.0 full-time equivalent Council Manager (Washington Management Service, Band 2). She said that all other costs, e.g., for additional staff support when available, meeting logistics, and language assistance services, are being provided for in-kind by the State Board of Health (Board).

Elizabeth Perez, Council Member (Department of Health), noted that overextending the Board's resources for language access is not ideal and that other agencies could offer their support. She spoke about the support the Council needs from state lawmakers for this redesign proposal. Linh shared that staff and the Redesign Co-Leads have been reaching out to lawmakers to spread awareness of the Council's work and get lawmakers' insight on the redesign concepts.

Member Fullerton asked which legislative committee might hear the Council's request legislation. Linh expressed uncertainty. She said the original bill in 2006 creating the Council (SB 6197) was introduced in the health care committee, and a bill this session may likely be heard in either the health care or state government committees.

Vice Chair Rodriguez said the Council also needs to consider a scenario where the proposal is further reduced. He said he heard the Council is not willing to compromise on community voice and asked which areas are necessary for the Council to do its work. Member Zinda thanked Council staff for their efforts throughout the redesign process, saying it is worth celebrating that we have gotten to this point.

The Council took a lunch break at 12:39 p.m. and reconvened at 1:27 p.m.

The Council returned to the discussion of the redesign proposal after lunch.

Vice Chair Rodriguez shared a question from the Zoom chat about when the Council's statutory and budgetary proposals might be approved. Linh said she did not have that information. Lydia Faitalia, Council Member (Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs), shared gratitude for Council staff and shared her concerns about the lengthiness of the review period for request legislation. She advocated for data disaggregation and highlighted an article in the New York Times about this topic.

Vice Chair Rodriguez conveyed disappointment that the intent section of the request legislation had to be reverted to language that is currently in statute (RCW 43.20.270). However, he said he was glad to see retention of important concepts such as addressing climate change, racism as a public health crisis, and youth membership on the Council. JanMarie Ward, Council Member (American Indian Health Commission),

echoed Vice Chair Rodriguez’s feelings about the inclusion of racism as public health crisis and the direction of intent language. She suggested that the proposed name change to “Governor’s Council for Health Justice and Equity” would allow the Council to take different avenues and that getting additional funding is a critical part to strategizing next steps. She said that she was glad staff and community members have stepped up and that the Council is moving forward despite not being fully funded.

## 6. STATE ACTION PLAN UPDATE—POSSIBLE ACTION

Vice Chair Rodriguez transitioned the Council to review the draft State Action Plan Update report. Linh presented the current draft of the State Action Plan Update (on file) to the Council for consideration. She stated that her goal is to submit the report to the Governor and the Legislature before the start of the 2024 Legislative Session in January. Linh stated the Council is required to submit an update every two years, though they did not submit one in 2022 because of the COVID-19 pandemic, diverted capacity to support legislative mandated projects, and Council staff transition. She said the redesign project presents a good opportunity to update the Legislature.

Vice Chair Rodriguez passed facilitation of the meeting Member Zinda, elected Chair Pro Tempore, at 2:13 p.m.

Discussion of the State Action Plan Update focused on:

- **Staffing needs.** Vice Chair Rodriguez suggested that the report indicate the level of staffing that went toward the Office of Equity and Environmental Justice Task Forces, since that comprised a substantial amount of the Council’s effort over the past several years.
- **Adding an appendix with definitions.** Member Huynh suggested this may be helpful for a broader audience.
- **The foundational truth, “We are interconnected.”** Member Perez and Vice Chair Rodriguez spoke about the connections between humans, other animals, and the natural environment. Member Perez suggested adding the Department of Health’s principle of One/Global Health as an additional framework and offered to find suggested language.
- **Naming the COVID-19 pandemic in the foundational truths.** Participants discussed whether to name the COVID-19 pandemic specifically or whether the report should reference “pandemics” more generally to anticipate future occurrences that may become more frequent due to climate change. Member Huynh said using more general language could build in before-the-fact protection for marginalized communities. Scot Sternberg, Community Member, said the Council should be ready for future natural disasters, pandemics, and social disasters, and the inequities Black, Indigenous, and People of Color communities face when they occur. Member Zinda and Member Davis agreed that they did not want the learnings from the COVID-19 pandemic to be lost and advocated for keeping it in the report. Commissioner Hill-Meyer suggested communicating the idea that disasters magnify the impact of systemic inequities. Member Davis and Jennifer Helseth, Council Member (Department of Children, Youth, and Families), spoke about the lasting impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, including

on children who have lost or delayed opportunities for educational attainment and literacy. David Ortiz, Pacific Islander Health Board, made a connection between climate literacy and health literacy. Member Ward said she appreciated the discussion of children's issues and that this would be an important issue to continue working on in state government.

- **Adding climate change to the foundational truths.** Participants discussed the need to attend to the intersections between climate change and racism, noting that marginalized communities are disproportionately impacted by climate change. Participants drafted the following updated language, "Climate change affects everyone, exacerbates health inequities, and must be addressed through a racial equity and intersectional lens."

**Motion:** The Council approves in concept the draft text of the January 2024 State Action Plan Update as reviewed with changes on December 14, 2023; directs staff to incorporate changes from today's discussion along with an elaboration on climate change and its impacts at the discretion of staff; and authorizes the Chair to approve the final report for submittal to the Governor and Legislature.

**Motion/Second:** Sigüenza/Faitalia. Approved unanimously.

The Council took a break at 2:37 p.m. and reconvened at approximately 2:50 p.m.

## 7. PRESENTATION: WASHINGTON STATE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH IMPLEMENTATION REGARDING STANDARDS FOR PRIVATE DETENTION FACILITIES

Chair Pro Tempore Zinda transitioned the Council to a presentation from the Washington State Department of Health (DOH) on the topic of health and safety standards for private detention facilities in Washington. She provided context around the Northwest Detention Center/ICE Processing Center (NWDC) and the Council's previous actions on this issue (see memo on file).

Soleil Muñiz and Nina Helpling, Department of Health, gave a presentation on recent laws that have passed, DOH's implementation efforts including rulemaking, opportunities for public participation, and anticipated challenges and limitations (presentation on file).

Scot Sternberg, Community Member, said that there are already rules in place for institutions such as skilled nursing and child welfare centers, schools, and prisons. He asked whether the existence of these rules would expedite rulemaking around detention centers. Nina said DOH has been looking at rules from and consulting with the Nursing Commission and the Department of Corrections. DOH staff hope to get feedback from formerly detained individuals to inform DOH rulemaking.

Nicole Johnson, Council Member (Department of Agriculture), asked what the NWDC looked like and whether it is similar to other incarceration facilities. Nina said DOH staff



are looking into the comparison and that there are clearer policies for state-governed centers. Member Fullerton asked who may have authority over the NWDC. Nina said that county officials have conducted a food inspection and published their findings online; that the WA State Department of Labor and Industries has visited in the past, though not since the passage of the most recent legislation; and that DOH has attempted to visit twice but has been denied access.

Scot asked whether new laws grant oversight of the use and misuse of solitary confinement. Joe Laxson, Department of Health, said that his office is currently working through this issue with federal agencies and that rulemaking in the coming year should give more clarity on this issue. Member Perez said she received a lot of feedback on this issue during the pandemic and said new legislation mentioned today affects just one private detention facility. Nina said the results of current litigation may impact any future facilities.

Member Perez asked how many people were held at the NWDC. Soleil replied that DOH does not know a precise number since they are unable to enter the facility and the facility is not sharing this information. She said DOH relies on the testimony of detainees and advocates—the detention facility has around 1,500 beds and seems to be at capacity.

Scot said there have been 7 hunger strikes at the NWDC over the past year since this is the only way detainees can take action. He said the current strike is on its 34<sup>th</sup> day and that people inside cannot wait until rules are approved in April 2025. He said it would be helpful to understand what DOH is doing to meet the urgency of taking action. Nina said they understand the urgency. She shared information on additional steps that could be taken before rulemaking is completed (see presentation on file).

Member Huynh asked about DOH's collaboration with local law enforcement (LLE) to handle issues of sexual and physical assault (slide 14). She asked whether LLE has ever intervened. Soleil said that while DOH has sent referrals to LLE agencies, DOH does not get an update on the results.

Member Faitalia asked where she could find demographic data on detainees and how DOH is doing rulemaking if it does not have this information. Soleil said DOH does not have these data as neither U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement nor the detention facility have shared it. DOH's understanding of demographics comes from community-focused organizations who work with detainees. Scot noted that detainees experience transfers between detention centers, making it difficult to base rulemaking on exact demographics.

Member Faitalia asked about cultural resources for detainees and whether there are children or elders housed at the NWDC. She also noted potential limitations on state authority and said this issue may need to be escalated to higher level agencies. Soleil said there are no children housed at this facility. She said DOH is trying to find out which languages are commonly spoken among detainees and has endeavored to



disseminate brochures with pre-paid postage, so folks who work with detainees are able to submit complaint forms. These brochures are available in 22 languages, as recommended by community advocates. Linh asked whether the non-presence of children at the NWDC interacts with family separations during the immigration and asylum processes. Soleil said that while DOH does not receive much information about this, there may be some overlap.

Members Fullerton and Perez asked what issues were at hand in the litigation. Joe said that the company operating the facility filed a lawsuit against the state and that the Attorney General's Office is working on this issue.

Commissioner Hill-Meyer asked why detainees are unable to leave voicemails on DOH's Complaint Resolution Unit line. Commissioner Hill-Meyer, Member Perez, and a Zoom chat participant discussed the logistics of possibly accepting calls automatically using computer programs.

Chair Pro Tempore Zinda encouraged participants to reach out to presenters for any further questions.

*To maintain the designated meeting end time, agenda items #8 (Agency Priorities for 2024 Legislative Session) and #9 (Announcements, Feedback, and Reflections) were skipped.*

## **ADJOURNMENT**

Chair Pro Tempore Zinda adjourned the meeting at 4:03 p.m.

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

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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](mailto:healthequity@sboh.wa.gov) TTY users can dial 711.

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