

GOVERNOR’S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES

SEPTEMBER 30, 2025 PUBLIC MEETING SUMMARY



MEETING AT RADIO KDNA

The Council meeting was held in Granger, Washington at Radio KDNA: the first 24/7 Spanish-language public radio station in the Pacific Northwest. The Council learned how Radio KDNA serves as a vital community organization connecting people with essential services and support. Radio KDNA is a non-profit founded by activists and farmworkers in 1979, dedicated to breaking barriers around literacy, language, discrimination, poverty, and illness by providing accessible, relevant information and resources to the community. The station covers a wide variety of topics from health, civic participation, and education to legal and emergency information. The station also engages community through events and public health campaigns.

PANEL: COMMUNITY YOUTH

The Council heard from a panel of three young leaders from Central Washington, Wendy Luciano, Kalista Silva, Kalia Zebty, who shared their perspectives on health, community, and systemic challenges. The panel was moderated by Ebubechi Abonyi, a member of the Washington State Department of Health’s Youth Advisory Council.

“We’re the future and we’re also the present. We’re also being affected by all the policies in our communities.” - Youth Panelist

Panelists highlighted key issues impacting their well-being, including limited access to clean water, unsafe neighborhoods, food insecurity, lack of mental health support, and economic and cultural barriers around therapy. Panelists shared the emotional toll of school shootings, gang violence, bullying, and the stress of navigating education and college readiness while dealing with generational and cultural expectations. Family, advisors and mentors, spiritual faith, sports, and peer support emerged as sources of strength and healing. They called for more youth-led spaces, accessible in-person resources, and leaders who genuinely listen and act on youth input. Meeting participants asked questions and the conversation concluded with affirmations from Council members, public participants, and the Council’s engagement staff, who pledged to help amplify youth voices further, including voices of youth who are incarcerated and Tribal youth. Panelists expressed a deep need for trust, safety, and authentic connection within their schools, communities, and leadership structures.

[Meeting Agenda](#)
[Meeting Materials](#)

HIGHLIGHTS:

- [Rapid Response Hub – Commission on Hispanic Affairs](#)
- [Summer 2025 Engagement Activities – Summary](#)
- [Hope & Health – Research Summary](#)
- [Youth Advisory Council Report – WA State Department of Health](#)

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If you need language translation or interpretation services to participate, please contact us at healthequity@sboh.wa.gov

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Question: What does leadership look like to you and how can adults and decision makers support youth change?

Response: **"Taking action, walking the talk, and listening to each voice. Giving youth the chance to speak about their concerns. And not afraid to challenge the norms of the system."** - Youth Panelist



Panelists portraits from left to right: Ebubechi Abonyi, Wendy Luciano, Kalista Silva, Kalia Zebty

PRESENTATION: HEALTH IMPACT REVIEWS – FISCAL YEAR 2025 UPDATE

Health Policy Analysts from the Washington State Board of Health, Cait Lang-Perez, Lindsay Herendeen, and Miranda Calmjoy, gave an update about the Health Impact Review (HIR) Program to the Council. An HIR is an objective, non-partisan, evidence-based tool that provides the Governor and state lawmakers with information about how proposed legislation may impact health and equity. Analysts spoke about how HIRs provide unbiased information, give Washington state-specific context, and support legislative discussions and decision making. For each HIR, staff interview people who have a range of expertise and the program compensates eligible contributors who are not otherwise paid for their time and knowledge. Since 2014, the team has completed 138 HIRs at the request of 64 lawmakers and the Governor. Over 80% of reviews are on bills related to the social drivers of health such as employment, education, economics, the criminal and civil legal systems, and behavioral health. Analysts also shared about their connections with other state researchers as well as participation in national conferences, reports, and communities of practice.

GOVERNOR’S POLICY STAFF UPDATE: HEALTH CARE, PUBLIC HEALTH, AND BEHAVIORAL HEALTH

Caitlin Safford, Senior Policy Advisor from the Governor’s Office, provided an update on the state’s response to federal policy changes, including changes to Medicaid and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP). She emphasized the challenges of managing reduced federal funding and the expiration of some federal tax credits, highlighting the state’s efforts to stretch health coverage, particularly for under-resourced and underserved populations. The Governor’s Office is also focused on preserving access to vaccines, informed by the West Coast Health Alliance’s science-based recommendations, and preparing for federal government shutdown impacts. Caitlin addressed questions from Council and community members, including concerns about trauma related to indiscriminate immigration enforcement and family separation and the need for more culturally and linguistically responsive mental health services.

Thank you to everyone who participated in the meeting. Your insights and contributions are invaluable in helping us shape decisions that affect communities.

We encourage the public to continue sharing your thoughts and engaging with us at future public meetings.

PUBLIC MEETING DATES
Tuesday, December 16, 2025

Times, locations, and 2026 meeting dates to be announced.

“O le tele o lima e māmā ai se avega” - Samoan Proverb
“Many hands make the burden (load) easier to carry”- English Translation
- Lydia Faitalia, Council member from the WA State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs

PROJECT DISCUSSION: STATEWIDE VISION FOR HEALTH AND WELL-BEING

The Council discussed forming an advisory committee to plan out the development of a statewide vision for health and well-being. While some raised questions about timeline, limited resources, and staff capacity, others emphasized the importance of long-term planning rooted in community voices. There was general support for moving forward with an advisory committee to work on a proposed project plan and recommendations on how to integrate aligned efforts, data and information, resources, and engagement strategies. Council members expressed their desire to see the committee reflect shared leadership and avoid repeating past government processes that lack follow-through. The conversation concluded with a call for Council members and key partners to take ownership of the work and ensure it reflects the lived experiences and needs of Washington’s diverse communities. Council staff will set up and support the planning advisory committee.



Council members and meeting participants take a photo with Mexica Danza group, CeAtl Tonalli.

"Thank you for listening to us. Not only is it my voice—there are thousands of us. The same thing that I need, everyone needs. The whole lower valley needs. Please take our voices to the highest place."
- Sunnyside Community Member

COUNCIL UPDATES

- The Council welcomes Yen Baynes as the new Lead Engagement Coordinator for Community and Tribal Relations.
- The Council deeply appreciates Dr. Benjamin Danielson’s inspirational and impactful leadership as Council Chair. Dr. Danielson’s term is ending and there will be a leadership transition when the Governor’s Office appoints a new Chair.
- Staff is working with the Governor’s Office to fill Council membership vacancies, including the community member seat. We encourage anyone who is interested to contact us at healthequity@sboh.wa.gov for more information.
- The Council’s engagement team met and gathered input from 82 community members throughout the summer. Read the summary [here](#).
- Some Council members and partners gathered with local community members for a conversation in Sunnyside. Residents shared concerns about rising costs, family separation, barriers to education and nutrition, unsafe labor conditions, farmworker rights, and government accountability.

HEALTH AND WELL-BEING THROUGH CULTURAL CELEBRATION

The Council extends deep gratitude to CeAtl Tonalli for nurturing community well-being through Mexica customs and Danza Azteca (traditional Aztec dances). Dancers led the Council in honoring the Yakama land where they gathered. They highlighted how cultural practice is essential to preserving health and well-being and encouraged the Council to continue to listen to and advocate for communities such as those in Central Washington.