



WASHINGTON STATE
LGBTQ
COMMISSION

Executive Director's Report

January 8th, 2021

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Commission Meeting
Virtual Platform

The Washington State LGBTQ Commission envisions a state where every lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, and intersex Washingtonian of any age feels safe, supported, and empowered.

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Below is a summary of the activities of the Commission staff from August to December 2020, including legislative advocacy and community outreach. The financial reports of the Commission are also attached to this report.

1. STAFF AND COMMISSIONERS ACTIVITIES

Staff: In the past few months, the support staff of the LGBTQ Commission had the extra support of several student interns from the Queer and Gender Studies Program at the University of Puget Sound. The student interns provided extra support in research, hosting virtual forums, and providing day-to-day support to the staff. A total of five students have participated of this internship. They researched and updated a list of LGBTQ resources in the state which is now live on our website at <https://lgbtq.wa.gov/resources>. The student interns also curated a docket of research papers on issues that affect the LGBTQ community, including research on older LGBT folk, rural communities, indigenous communities, incarcerated LGBTQ folk, and other important issues that we are working on.

In late November and early December, the Commission's Executive Assistant, Omar Santana, was activated to support the COVID-19 response efforts with the Department of Health. At this same time, the Commission welcomed a new, full time intern through a partnership with WorkEx, an organization that supports the transition of military personnel from service to civilian life. Brandon Hancock, from the US Army and stationed at the Joint Base Lewis-McCord, started working with the Commission in mid-December. Brandon has been primarily doing legislative research and offering administrative support during Omar's service with the DOH.

Outreach:

The COVID-19 pandemic had a significant impact on the Commission. Due to the Governor's orders, we have worked remotely throughout the last seven months

the staff has worked remotely. This has presented challenges to outreach events such as town halls or in-person visits. However, the Commission has been able to host several community outreach events and participated of various meetings and outreach opportunities virtually.

The following outreach events were hosted by the LGBTQ Commission:

- ***Virtual Town Halls, August***; throughout the month of August, the Commission hosted four virtual town halls: Puget Sound, Eastern & Central WA, Southwest & Olympic Peninsula, and a town hall for Spanish-speaking communities. Some of the town halls were very well attended, and a total of approximately 80-90 people participated throughout the month.
- ***Virtual Town Hall for Franklin, Benton, and Walla Walla Counties, November***: the Commission planned to host an in-person town hall with the community of these counties. However, due to the extension of the Governor's emergency orders, the event had to be move to a virtual platform. During this town hall we heard concerns from the communities in these counties. Earlier in the summer, a situation with the Benton-Franklin Health Department prompted some community members to reach out to the Commission for support. After exploring what type of support the Commission was able to provide, it was decided to offer a public forum and to invite the regional representative of the Governor's office to hear concerns from constituents. Several ideas came out of this town hall, including actions to address health care access by LGBTQ folk in rural areas and in non-LGBTQ welcoming areas, outreach to law enforcement bodies to participate of the "Safe Place Program", and advocacy for targeted support for LGBTQ businesses that serve as community gathering spaces and had to close due to COVID-19 restrictions.
- ***Virtual Open Enrollment Q&A With Trans Community, December***: upon the request of the Washington HealthPlan Exchange, the Commission co-hosted a virtual Q&A session to address issues of enrollment, healthcare plan applications, changes to questions regarding sex and gender, as well as other health access related questions. This forum was very well received and participants expressed both their gratitude and their desire to have more similar forums in the future.

Community and official events attended and relationship with grassroots groups:

- **Entre Hermanos**, Seattle: invited to participate of their weekly radio show for Spanish-speaking LGBTQ Washingtonians. Introduced the work of the Commission and how we can support Latino, Latina, Latinx, and Hispanic Washingtonians.
- **La Movida**, Madison, WI: participated of a radio interview hosted by the primary Spanish-speaking radio state in Wisconsin, to discuss LGBTQ rights, and LGBTQ Latino/a/x identity.
- **Waves Ahead**, San Juan, PR: recorded a two-part podcast series with director of programs from this LGBTQ community center for LGBTQ seniors in Puerto Rico.
- **BECU**, Tukwila: was featured speaker at the monthly meeting the LGBTQ+ employees group, introduced the work of the Commission and addressed concerns about LGBTQ protections in the workplace.
- **Migrant Workers**, Yakima: met with community activists to address questions about rights for LGBTQ migrant workers and discuss ways in which the Commission can support this particular community.
- **Orgullo Latinx**, Madison, WI: invited to be the featured speaker at two monthly meetings of the only LGBTQ Latinx group in Dane County, WI, to discuss issues related to identity, faith, and LGBTQ rights.
- **Pink & Black Prison Abolition**, Seattle: met several times with leaders from this group to discuss concerns related to treatment of incarcerated transgender and gender non-conforming people. We also discussed possible legislation to address concerns related to incarcerated people's rights in jails, prisons, and detention centers.
- **LGBTQ Community leaders**, Seattle: participated of the annual gathering of community leaders convened by the GSBA and the WA Legislature Pink Caucus to address concerns from the LGBTQ community throughout the state and coordinate legislative priorities.
- **Latino Leadership Network**, Olympia: met with representatives of this business resources group to start planning a spring program to address mental health and LGBTQ identity within the Latino community.
- **EmRG**, Seattle: I have met several times with this business resource group based in Seattle. Was invited to be the feature speaker at their monthly meeting to introduce the work of the Commission, address

- concerns related to LGBTQ protections in the workplace, and share ideas on collaboration, including business support for LGBTQ certification for small LGBTQ-owned businesses.
- **PFLAG Washington**: was invited to be the keynote speaker at their annual convention.
 - **University of Puget Sound**, Tacoma: along with senior policy advisor RaShelle Davis, was invited to be part of a panel for the Gender and Queer Studies Program on how activism is transformed into policy at the state level to protect underrepresented communities and address their needs.
 - **Arches Magazine**: publication of the alumni association of the University of Puget Sound. Was interviewed for an article on the partnership between the school and the Commission to provide internship opportunities to LGBTQ students.
 - **PCAF**, Tacoma and Olympia: was invited to be one of the judges for their annual AIDS Day Fashion Show to promote condom use and safe sex practices.
 - **LGBTQ Executive Directors Group**, Pierce County: have continued to participate of monthly meetings, and currently working on coordinating a state-wide LGBTQ ED gathering with leaders from this group and a parallel group in Seattle.

2. ADVOCACY AND LEGISLATION

Government Agencies

The Commission has the mandate to engage government agencies and offer support and feedback on issues related to LGBTQ inclusion. Currently, I have met or being involved in work with the following agencies to discuss matters related to LGBTQ inclusion:

- **Health and Human Services Sex and Gender Coalition**: an interagency workgroup to address the need to update forms, applications, and systems to best record and get information on people's gender identity in way that would both provide them options to self-identify and get services that only recognize the gender binary.

- Councilwoman Kristina Walker, **Tacoma City Council**: met with the Councilwoman and other LGBTQ leaders from the city to discuss challenges and needs of the community in the city.
- **VA Seattle LGBTQ Veterans Coordinator**: conversations with partners at the VA on how to best coordinate services, provide information, and find support for LGBTQ veterans and their families.
- **Professional Educator Standard Board**, Director Alexandra Manuel: met with Director Manuel to discuss safety and security issues related to public meetings.
- **Governor's Poverty Reduction Workgroup**: I had several meetings with staff from this workgroup to provide input, answer concerns raised by constituents, and offer feedback on action plan and recommendations. The workgroup also participated of the Commission's last public meeting.
- **Aging and Long-Term Support Administration**, Assistant Secretary Bill Moss: met with Assistant Secretary Moss to discuss concerns and issues faced by older LGBTQ in care facilities, retirement communities, and other care institutions. Currently working in collaboration with ALTSA to provide feedback and recommendations on rulemaking, and on their training materials and programs for caregivers.
- **King County Courts**: participated of their Latinx Heritage Virtual Festival, in which WA State Superior Court Chief-Justice Steve Gonzalez was the featured speaker.
- Minority Commissions – **Commission on African American Affairs**, **Commission on Hispanic Affairs**, **Commission on Asian Pacific Islander Affairs**, and **Women's Commission**: participated of monthly calls with colleagues to support cross-agency work. Additionally, I have met with the leads of these agencies regularly to ask for feedback, offer support, or work on specific projects.
- **Office of the Education Ombuds**, Director Carrie Basas: have met frequently with Director Basas to discuss matters related to children's access to safe educational environment during schools closings. I have also provided guidance to this office on how to work with same-sex families, and with families with LGBTQ children.
- **Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN)**: as their Executive Sponsor, I meet with the leadership team monthly for three hours to go over plans, offer support, listen to concerns, help develop programs,

and serve as an advocate for the group with the Governor's Office and OFM.

- **Office of Financial Management:** several meetings took place with staff at OFM in different divisions to process issues related to agency budget cuts, personnel and furloughs plans, internship programs, and other administrative matters.
- **Department of Health:** have continued to provide feedback to their outreach efforts on education regarding COVID-19 and vulnerable communities.
- **Office of Minority and Women Enterprises:** continued conversations on support to minority own businesses, especially LGBTQ-owned businesses.
- **Office for Regulatory Innovation and Assistance,** Director Aaron Everett: ORIA is the convener of the Small Business Liaison Group of which I am a part, providing feedback and support on reaching out to LGBTQ small businesses for opportunities. I have also met with Director Everett as ORIA and the Commission are planning our move to a shared space.
- **Washington Health Benefits Exchange:** I have continued to meet with staff at the Exchange to provide feedback on their rolling of new systems and applications. I have also reached out to community members to offer comments and feedback on the agency's plans to be more inclusive of transgender identities.
- **Results Washington:** participated of their week-long LEAN Conference, attending two workshops on leadership and management in government agencies.
- **Saying It Out Loud Conference:** I have continued to participate of monthly meetings for the SIOL Conference in Washington, which provides tools for people interested in working with or currently providing services to LGBTQ people. I have also worked on recruiting members of the coordinating committee.

During the last few months, I have also participated of weekly calls with colleagues from the Small Agency Cabinet and Executive Team staff to address concerns related to COVID-19 restrictions, personnel policies, remote work, and other important matters for our agencies and the Executive Branch during the pandemic.

I continue being involved in work related to COVID-19 recovery and have participated of economic recovery and reopening schools workgroups. Additionally, I have offered support and feedback to the policy advisors on COVID-19 plans, specifically on large faith gatherings, housing issues, and support for small businesses (specifically, LGBTQ-owned or LGBTQ safe spaces.)

Legislation

- Met with Representative My-Linh Thai and Senator Bob Hasegawa to provide feedback and recommendations on proposed bill to require equity impact statement for bills that have a fiscal impact statement. (The draft of this bill is attached.)
- Provided feedback to Senator Hasegawa related to his proposed bill to amend the statute that established the Office of Equity. (The draft of this bill is attached.)
- Provided feedback to Legal Voice on proposed bill to prevent health insurance from deny access to appropriate care for transgender individuals. (The draft of this bill is attached. The bill is currently being evaluated by a Senator for possible introduction in session.)
- Met with the LGBTQ Commission Legislative Advisors, Senator Claire Wilson, Representative Nicole Macri, and Representative Skyler Rude to discuss important issues, hear their constituents' concerns, and share ideas on how to approach important issues during this legislative session.