



WASHINGTON STATE
LGBTQ
COMMISSION

Executive Director's Report

May 8th, 2021

By J. Manny Santiago

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.

Executive Director's Report May 8th, 2021

Below is a summary of the activities of the Commission staff from March and April 2021, 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 April the Commission said good bye to Brandon H. who served as intern through WorkEx. Brandon focused on monitoring legislation and kept the Commission updated on important aspects of the process. The Commissioners had an opportunity to thank Brandon during the last public meeting. He now moves on to Law School on the East Coast. In late April, Omar S., executive assistant for the Commission, had an accident and is currently on medical leave until his medical team gives him the clear to come back to work. Omar continues healing and getting better. I have checked on him regularly and offered support. We look forward to having Omar back with us! In April also we welcomed Mira Farrow, who is completing her internship as part of her graduate studies in Social Work at the University of Washington. Mira will continue Brandon's work with legislation and will also be heading the planning for the WA State Pride celebration in June. Katie K., continues to provide support as intern until mid-May. I am currently in conversations with the University of Puget Sound for a possible summer intern.

Outreach:

The following outreach events were hosted or co-hosted by the LGBTQ Commission:

- **LGBTQ Communities & COVID-19 Vaccines;** a live, virtual panel on hosted on March 23rd to address community concerns related to the COVID-19 vaccines. The following panelists will be addressing different aspects of COVID-19 vaccines as they relate to the LGBTQ population:
 - o Dr. Vy Chu, founder and family medicine practitioner at Capitol Hill Medical

- David Hirshberg, PhD, researcher specializing in virus and bacteria, founder of RAIN Incubator
- Diana Krishna, COVID-19 Response Coordinator, UTOPIA Washington
- Passia Abraham and Yenifer Baynes, COVID-19 Response, WA Department of Health

Community and official events attended and relationship with grassroots groups:

- **Spectrum Spokane:** met with Director Horvath to discuss partnerships, resources, and mutual support.
- **The Bayard Desk Podcast:** was a guest speaker for this weekly podcast out of Tacoma, to discuss LGBTQ families and support systems.
- **UTOPIA Washington:** was in communication with Director Johnson and D. Krishna, COVID-19 Response Coordinator, to plan for vaccines panel.
- **University of Puget Sound – Experience Learning:** met with Director R. Houston to discuss continued internship partnership.
- **Legal Voice:** participated of the agency’s legislative lunch and learn event to discuss the federal Equality Act.
- **Latino Leadership Network:** participated of their monthly membership meeting.
- **University of Washington - Tacoma:** met with staff from the Social Work program to discuss details of internship partnership.
- **WA Legislature – Black and People of Color Caucuses:** participated of the reception cohosted by the Black Caucus and the People of Color Caucus of the Legislature.
- **GSBA:** participated as a speaker at their annual Matchmaking event for members.
- **Thurston County Superior Court:** recently met with AAG Stacia Hollar to discuss the possibility of being part of a countywide initiative by the Thurston Co. Superior Court to review their processes to implement protocols to affirm people’s identities in court. (Commissioner T. Hill-Meyer was also invited to be part of these conversations, which led to both of us participating of meetings with the workgroup.)
- **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.
- **Equal Rights Washington:** met with C. Morris, lobbyist for ERW, to explore the possibility of having the LGBTQ Commission lead the conversations related to the HCA's rule changes on access to HIV medications.
 - **Waves Ahead – SAGE Puerto Rico:** I recently visited the brand-new location of this LGBTQ community center, the first of its kind in Puerto Rico. I have also been invited to be part of their Board of Directors. The center has two locations in the Island: one in San Juan (capital metro area) and one is Cabo Rojo (southwest coastal town.)

In addition to these regular community outreach events, I also have the honor of mentoring two young gay men who sought out a mentoring relationship. One of these relationships is through the Jane's Fellowship of the Russell Family Foundation and the second mentorship is as result of my role with RAIN. I have met a few times with both people to discuss professional goals, navigating systems as LGBTQ people of color, and personal and professional development.

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:

- **Office of Boards and Commissions:** met with Director Algera to discuss reappointments and processes.
- **Office for Regulatory Innovation and Assistance:** met with the recently appointed Director of ORIA, D. McConnon, to catch up and get to know each other as our agencies will be sharing space in the new office. I also shared with Director McConnon the Commission's plans to bring LGBTQ certification for businesses and how ORIA can be involved in the work.
- **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. I participate of meeting with the Coalition every other week.
- **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. My current role with the coordinating committee was to recruit members for a panel of LGBTQ officers in WA State, which will include two members of our Commission, Commissioners Botzer and Robinson.
 - **Department of Corrections:** met several times with staff from the DOC to address concerns related to trans prisoners. Additionally, helped DOC leadership and communications office to navigate coordinated attacks from anti-LGBTQ and anti-trans groups opposing their trans-affirming policies.
 - **Department of Health:** met with staff from the DOH to discuss participation in vaccines panel. I have also participated of biweekly calls with community groups hosted by DOH to address vaccines access and equity in distribution. Finally, shared with Secretary of Health Dr. Shah the Commission's concerns related to the lack of collecting sexual orientation and gender identity data from people receiving COVID-19 vaccines.
 - **Office of Financial Management:** OFM hosts monthly meetings with the executive sponsors for the state's business resource groups and I have attended all meetings this year. Additionally, I have engaged OFM and their HR department in conversations related to equity in compensation for support staff.
 - Minority Commissions – **Commission on African American Affairs, Commission on Hispanic Affairs, Commission on Asian Pacific Islander Affairs, and Women's Commission:** participated of regular 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 Equity:** have collaborated with Dr. Karen Johnson (Dr. J.) in hiring support staff for the office as well as meeting to discuss the goals of the office and offer feedback and input on the work.

- **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. Recently met with the co-chairs of the group to catch up on the work of the BRG, offer support and feedback, and strengthen relationships.
- **Department of Children, Youth, and Families:** I have met regularly with Secretary Ross to discuss matters related to discrimination against children who identify as LGBTQ by foster families.
- **Results Washington:** recently met with Director C. Bezanson to discuss Results Washington's strategic plan and offer feedback. Director Bezanson has invited the Commission to be part of the work and the Commission is considering a proposal from the Executive Committee to formally join Results Washington's workgroup.

During legislative session, I participated of weekly sub-cabinet meetings to discuss legislative priorities and strategies to pass LGBTQ-affirming legislation. I have also participated of regular cabinet meetings and of bi-weekly meetings of the Small Agency Cabinet. The Small Agency Cabinet is currently working on issues related to anti-racism, DEI within our agencies.

I have also been in conversations with the Governor Office related to complaints received by constituents in Lewis County related to anti-LGBTQ activities and harassment.

Legislation

(See attached final report on priority legislation prepared by Mira F.)

Budget

(See attached report from OFM.)