



WASHINGTON STATE
LGBTQ
COMMISSION

Executive Director's Report

September 17th, 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.

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Below is a summary of the activities of the Commission staff from May to mid-September 2021, including legislative advocacy and community outreach. Due to recent administrative changes at OFM's Budget Office, no budget reports have been received for the Commission for this period.

1. STAFF AND COMMISSIONERS ACTIVITIES

Staff: During the summer the Commission welcomed Kayla Grinsfelder, undergraduate student at University of Puget Sound, as part-time intern. Kayla helped with different aspects of Commission work such as providing staff for committee meetings and research on LGBTQ business certification and HIV medication access. We said goodbye to Kayla in late August. During the summer, Omar S.'s position was reclassified, and he was appointed as Program Manager for the Commission. In early September, Omar shared the news of his transition to a new position as DEI manager with a division of the WA Department of Health. He will be with the Commission through the end of September. In late September, the Commission will welcome Tracey Carlos as Program Manager. Tracey comes from the Department of Labor & Industries, where she has served the people of Washington for over ten years. Tracey is also active with the Rainbow Alliance & Inclusion Network (RAIN), and has served in leadership capacities with this business resource group in different capacities, more recently as chair of their Communications Subcommittee. Tracey also collaborates with several local nonprofit and policy advocacy groups in Thurston County, including labor unions. Her experience with policy analysis, community engagement, and general government administration will serve the Commissioner quite well as we enter into our third year of work.

Contractors: This past legislative session, the Legislature directed the Commission to form a workgroup to address community concerns regarding access to HIV medications through Medicaid. In order to carry out this work, the Commission has contracted with Martha C. Bean and her colleague Renee McCoy to serve as facilitators. Ms. Bean has worked with different state agencies, primarily around environmental and health policies. She brings over 20 years of experience working with public and private agencies, and has a fresh, human-centered, and

reconciliatory approach to this work. Ms. Bean will be under contract with the Commission until the report of this workgroup is submitted to the Legislature in November.

Outreach:

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

- **Panel on Anti-Asian Hatred;** a live, virtual conversation on May 27th as part of Asian & Pacific Islander American Heritage Month with LGBTQ Asian-Americans to address the impact of anti-Asian hatred from their perspective. Panelists were Rosa Mai from the Commission on Asian and Pacific Islander American Affairs, and Bojie Mageo, local entrepreneur and community activist.
- **Equality Act Educational Conversation;** the Commission partnered with local community organizations to record and broadcast a video on June 1st addressing the Equality Act currently in US Congress. This educational panel served as a way of educating the community on how they can get involved in helping this federal legislative advance. Panelists include:
 - Dana Savage, Board member QLaw Foundation, moderator
 - Congresswoman Pramila Jayapal, D - WA 7th District
 - Stella Keating, Champion with GenderCool Project
 - Denise Diskin, Executive Director QLaw Foundation
 - Cyrus Mostaghim, Policy expert on federal regulations
- **Rainbow Flag Raising on Capitol Campus;** on June 17th, the Commission welcomed Governor Jay Inslee to raise the flag on the Capitol Campus, following health regulations at the time. It was the first in-person event for the Commission since the Emergency Declaration due to COVID-19. Speakers included:
 - Governor Jay Inslee
 - Commissioner Josette Ross
 - Commissioner Agaiotupu Viena
 - Ryan Douglass, Co-Chair RAIN
 - Director J. Manny Santiago

Community and official events attended and relationship with grassroots groups:

- **Poulsbo Rotary Club:** participated of a conversation with club members on LGBTQ issues and their intersection with race and ethnicity as part of the club's year-long educational events on equity and diversity.
- **Bastyr University:** met with student representatives as they planned Pride events for students, faculty, and staff.
- **Thurston County Courts:** was part of conversations with the courts on how to advance LGBTQ-policies, specifically regarding use of pronouns for gender-expansive and gender non-binary folk in court.
- **Washington Nonprofits:** have met with leaders from this organization and other partners to coordinate statewide LGBTQ Executive Directors gathering.
- **PCAF:** met with Director Seelbach to learn more about challenges related to recently adopted rules regarding access to HIV medications through Medicaid.
- **Delta Dental of WA – Finance Division:** participated as a speaker for employees' resource group for Delta Dental of Washington.
- **Seattle Counseling Services:** met with recently appointed Executive Director, Victor Loo, to learn more about the agency and working on partnerships and collaboration.
- **Lavender Rights Project:** have met a few times with leadership of the group and the Trans Woman of Color Taskforce, and participated of a community brunch coordinated by the agency.
- **LGBTQ+ Heroes Stamp Campaign:** was keynote speaker at an event honoring Marsha P. Johnson during her birthday, sponsored by the Heroes Stamp Campaign, which is proposing the issuing of postal stamps with the images of prominent LGBTQ historical figures in US American history.
- **SOMOS Seattle:** represented the Commission and Governor Inslee at their Reunited With Pride event in July.
- **United Way of Pierce County:** currently collaborating with this agency in their plans for Hispanic Heritage Month.
- **WA Legislature – Black and People of Color Caucus:** attended a webinar hosted by this caucus on issues related to needs within POC communities.

- **GSBA:** currently serving on their nominating committee for Business and Humanitarian Awards.
- **Disability Rights Washington:** continue to meet with representatives of this group to address concerns of privacy for LGBTQ, and specifically trans and gender non-binary incarcerated people.
- **HIV Coalition:** have participated of regular calls with a group of HIV activists to discuss concerns regarding recent changes to HCA rules for medications.
- **Community members:** I have met with several community members from around the state who have requested to speak with the Commission on issues they have experienced in this regions.

In addition to this work with community groups, I have continued to provide mentoring to emerging LGBTQ leaders, currently adding one more mentee for a total of three people with whom I regularly meet for support. I am currently working with a young lesbian woman and two young gay men of color. I also serve on the Board of Directors for Tacoma Community House, and Waves Ahead – SAGE Puerto Rico, and recently started serving on the Board of Trustees for the Tacoma Art Museum.

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:

- **HIV Medication Access Workgroup:** as instructed by the Legislature, the Commission has convened a workgroup to address concerns related to HIV medication access. This workgroup consists of several partners including: HCA, DOH, people living with HIV, healthcare providers, pharmaceutical representatives, HIV service organizations, and others. The workgroup held its first meeting in September and will continue to meet and host town halls through the next few months and present a short report to the Legislature by November 1st as requested. All the

materials related to this work can be accessed through the Commission's website here: <https://lgbtq.wa.gov/advocacy/community-work/hiv-medication-access-workgroup>

- **Office of Boards and Commissions:** have continued to meet with their director, Ambar Algera and with Deputy Chief of Staff Kelly Wicker to discuss appointments and reappointments. I also met with three applicants for Commissioners for introductions and share more information about the Commission and its work.
- **Legislative Poverty Reduction Workgroup:** I am currently participating of meetings with this group to discuss ideas to address poverty in Washington and generate ideas on how to reduce poverty and support vulnerable communities.
- **Universal Basic Income Workgroup:** I am currently part of the UBI workgroup which has the mandate to generate ideas to implement a UNI pilot program for the state.
- **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. Participated of the annual conference and continue being part of the coordinating committee for 2022.
- **Department of Corrections:** I have continued to work with the administration of the DOC especially as anti-trans groups have targeted the agency for their trans-affirming policies regarding trans and non-binary folk in prison.
- **Department of Health:** once again shared my concerns of lack of SOGI data collection for vaccinations with Secretary Shah as well as with the Governor's Executive Team. I also met with leadership staff of the Infectious Diseases programs for DOH as we prepare for the work with the HIV Medication Access Workgroup.

- **Health Care Authority:** met with Director Sue Birch and other leadership staff regarding rules around HIV medication access through Medicaid.
- **Human Rights Commission:** have met with Director Sharon Ortiz and her staff to address concerns related to anti-trans policies implemented by local businesses.
- **Office of the Insurance Commissioner:** met with policy staff from the OIC to learn more about processes to add mandates for WA insurance companies related to infertility treatment.
- **Office of the Speaker of the House:** have met a few times with Speaker Jinkins to address community concerns related to LGBTQ issues.
- **Office of the Education Ombuds:** have met regularly with staff and leadership from the office to address concerns brought to us from a school district on the Spokane area. The office is currently working with the victims of harassment and their local school district to address concerns.
- **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.) to continue supporting the work of equity and inclusion in the state.
- **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.
- **Results Washington:** participate of regular meetings and updates on their work as instructed by the Commission during our last meeting.

- **Small Agencies Cabinet Forum:** have participated of regular Small Agencies Cabinet Forums where issues related to governance, policy work, COVID-19 related work, and DEI issues are addressed.
- **Trainings:** with several IT changes and updates, as well as new regulations and rules related to public meetings and other emergency declarations, I have attended several virtual trainings and educational events to stay up to date on these matters.
- **Legislation Prework:** I have met with policy advisors, agency heads, and community groups to address the following issues that might be presented to the Legislature this coming session:
 - **Infertility treatment:** currently DOH completed a Sunrise Review on the possibility of adding infertility treatment as a mandate for insurance companies in Washington. I also met with Representative Eileen Cody (D-34th District) to discuss the draft bill she presented to the DOH for the review.
 - **Privacy for Trans and Gender Nonbinary people in prison:** I have met with policy advisors as well as the Governor's legal team to discuss the possibility of addressing these concerns through legislation.
 - **Sex Work Policies:** currently in conversations with policy advisors and the Governor's Executive Team to find ways to loosen or eliminate restrictions on sex work in Washington.
 - **LGBTQ Business Certification:** currently in conversations with policy advisors and local governments to cultivate support for proposals to add LGBTQ business certification in the state.

Budget

Due to recent changes in leadership as well as systems of reporting, the Budget Office has not submitted reports to Commissions.