



WASHINGTON STATE
LGBTQ
COMMISSION

Executive Director's Report

March 18th, 2022

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 January and February 2022, and part of February 2022, including legislative advocacy and community outreach.

1. STAFF AND COMMISSIONERS ACTIVITIES

Staff: During legislative session, our Program Manager, Tracey Carlos, was actively monitoring legislation and keeping an updated list of bills as they moved through the legislative chambers. During legislative session, I also participated of weekly sub-cabinet meetings with policy advisors to receive updates and share information on priority legislation for the Governor's Office. Finally, staff at the Commission are completing courses through Cornell University to be DEI certified professionals.

Outreach:

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

- **Clark County Town Hall:** the Commission held its first in-person town hall in Vancouver, WA on Friday, February 11. The event was attended by over a dozen local leaders. Commissioner Alicia Sojourner and PFLAG Southwest WA president Jessica Cole helped coordinate and shared with the community about their respective work on LGBTQ issues.
- **Queer Women Town Hall:** the Commission in collaboration with the *Washington State Women's Commission*, held a virtual town hall focused on queer women on Wednesday, March 9. About a dozen people attended the event. Tracey Carlos was the moderator for the town hall, and panelists Pat McIntyre (Tacoma Older LGBT), Bre Johnson (The Trevor Project), and Jaelynn Scott (Lavender Rights Project) shared from their respective areas of expertise.

Community and official events attended and relationship with grassroots groups:

- **Foundation for Homeless & Poverty Management:** met with Director Drayton Jackson and staff to discuss partnerships and mutual support. The Foundation is looking to expand services to attend the specific needs of LGBTQ people in Kitsap County.
- **DecrimWA:** met twice with representatives from DecrimWA to discuss budget proviso on study to decriminalize sex work in Washington. As a result of these conversations, the Commission and the Policy Office requested the Legislature to pull the proviso off their budget.
- **Everett Herald newspaper:** was interviewed regarding the work to request insurance plans to cover infertility treatments.
- **Community members:** the Commission staff continues to meet with community members who bring up important issues to our attention.

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:

- **LGBTQ Legislative Caucus:** met with several legislators throughout session.
- **Department of Children, Youth, and Families:** have participated of a workgroup designing outreach materials to recruit more LGBTQ-affirming foster homes.
- **Office of Independent Investigations:** met with Joanna Carns, interim director of the newly formed office, to provide support as the work of the office is being defined.
- **Department of Licensing:** participated of a workgroup meeting to discuss updates to the content of curriculum to license realtors in WA. The updated curriculum must include issues of equity in real estate, including LGBTQ issues.
- **Office of the Education Ombuds and Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction:** recently met with the Director of the OEO and

- representatives from OSPI to discuss ongoing challenges faced by LGBTQ students, especially around banning of books with LGBTQ content.
- **WA Legislature Internship program:** was guest speaker at one of the weekly meetings of the program and shared with the 2022 interns on issues of leadership, state government, inter-agency cooperation, and others.
 - **Washington Recovery Group:** regularly participate of meetings of the WA Recovery Group, currently addressing system-wide challenges to accessing services and support by underserved communities.
 - **Department of Social and Health Services:** participating of interviewing process for candidates for the Assistant Secretary of Economic Service Administration.
 - **Office of Boards and Commission:** have met with staff to discuss appointments to fill the vacancy created by the resignation of former Commissioner Karen Goldsen.
 - **Legislative Poverty Reduction Workgroup:** continue 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:** continue participating 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.
 - **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. I also met with staff from OFM to discuss budget provisos and requests.

- **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:** collaborate regularly and meet once a month with the Director of the office to discuss equity programs.
- **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.
- **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.

In addition of participating of the regular meetings of taskforces and workgroups to which the Commission is appointed, both Tracey and I have been working on internal administrative tasks. We are currently learning more about internal policies from the Office of Financial Management related to travel policies, budget management, and similar areas. We are also working with the facilities team to coordinate reentry to the office, which will most likely happen in April. I spend some time consulting with other agency leads and staff, offering suggestions and feedback on their LGBTQ inclusion policies, service protocols, and similar areas. Tracey is also working with a small coordinating committee composed of representatives of RAIN, Capitol City Pride, and Commissioners to plan the statewide Rainbow Flag Raising Ceremony on the Capitol Campus this summer.

Finally, we also held the first meeting of the Restructuring Committee to explore the different options for committee structure and to address Commissioners’ onboarding process and engagement. The committee expects to have concrete proposals for the Commission at the next public meeting.

3. COMMISSION EVENTS CALENDAR

Public meetings:

- Friday, May 20th from 10:00 am – 12:30 pm
- Friday, July 15th from 10:00 am – 12:30 pm
- Friday, September 16th from 10:00 am – 12:30 pm
- Friday, November 18th from 10:00 am – 12:30 pm (officers elections during this meeting)

Town Halls:

- Spokane Country Town Hall – Saturday, April 30th in the afternoon
- Skagit County Town Hall – Friday, June 10th in the afternoon/evening
- Benton/Franklin Counties Town Hall – August 20th during the day