



WASHINGTON STATE  
**LGBTQ**  
COMMISSION

## **End of the Year Report**

January 17, 2024

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## End of the Year Report

January 17<sup>th</sup>, 2025

The following is a detailed report on the Commission Staff's activities in 2024, including legislative advocacy and community outreach efforts.

### Message from the Director

It is the intent of the WA State LGBTQ Commission staff to present a review of the accomplishments and advancements of the strategic plan while identifying areas and goals that are in progress and or needing to be addressed.

An important note is that from January 31st-August 15<sup>th</sup>, there was a months long search for a new Executive Director. Staff, with the integral support of Interim-Director, Sheri Sawyer, achieved multiple major milestones within that timeframe. I want to highlight some of the biggest lifts.

- Launching a first of its kind statewide survey.
- Supporting an Executive Director search and onboarding.
- Recruiting six new commissioner appointments, developing onboarding training, successfully onboarding all six new commissioners.
- Development, recruitment, and launching of a 12 appointed Youth Advisory Council.

Each one of these are a significant accomplishment on their own, let alone doing so not being fully staffed. I would like to give a special acknowledgment to Sam Fennell and Sawyer Tuttle for their dedication to the ongoing success of the LGBTQ Commission.

### Overview of the Commission

#### **Mission Statement:**

The Washington State LGBTQ Commission works to improve the state's interface with the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit, and intersex community, identify the needs of its members, and ensuring that there is an effective means of advocating for LGBTQ equity in all aspects of state government.

#### **Vision Statement:**

As public servants committed to advancing equity and fostering liberation for all 2SLGBTQIA+ people, we embrace humility, compassion, diversity, collaboration, respect, and joy in our work. We pledge to honor public involvement, community accessibility, and to listen and proactively center the needs of the most marginalized members of our community.

#### **About the Commission:**

Established through legislation in 2019, the Washington State LGBTQ Commission is a state agency with an advisory board of 15 commissioners who identify as part of the LGBTQ community in the state. Each commissioner is appointed by the Governor and serves a three-year term. Commissioners represent the wealth of experiences and diversity of the LGBTQ community in Washington and come from different parts of the state. The Commission works to advise the Governor, executive branch agencies, and the legislature on issues that impact 2SLGBTQIA+ Washingtonians. The Commission is currently conducting a first-of-its-kind statewide survey of 2SLGBTQIA+ people to better inform our policy suggestions. The Washington State LGBTQ Youth Advisory Council, a program of the Commission, is a new opportunity for 2SLGBTQIA+ youth to have their voices heard – inspired by a roundtable with youth and then Governor Jay Inslee.

## 2024 Highlights and Achievements

### Community Engagement

- **Public Meetings**

In 2024, the Commission hosted five public meetings across Washington State, fostering meaningful dialogue and building strong connections with local organizations in each region. These engagements allowed us to better understand and address the unique needs of LGBTQ communities statewide.

- **Spokane Travel**

Staff traveled to Spokane to meet with community members, local leaders, organizations, and school leaders. The intent was to make introductions and build relationships with the commission, our work, and learn about the work, issues, and priorities happening in that region. We were eternally grateful to Commissioners Figueroa and Roo for joining us for some of these meetings. Additionally, we distributed fliers and information about the survey with local businesses.

- Spokane Pride
- City Council Member Zack Zappone
- Spokane Community College Pride
- Spectrum Center
- SAN Pride
- Riverside School District
- LGBTQIA+ Community Members

- **Say It Out Loud Conference**

Staff was able to connect, collaborate, and strengthen community bonds through meaningful conversations and shared experiences.

- **Convening Equity Conference**

Staff was able to connect with diverse community members, organizations, and leaders from across the state.

## Partnerships and Collaborations

- **Strengthening Collaborative Relationships**  
We established essential partnerships with key organizations and commissions, including the Office of Equity, the Women’s Commission, the Commission on Hispanic Affairs, the Commission on African American Affairs, and the Commission on Asian Pacific Islander Affairs. These relationships have enhanced our ability to work for intersectional equity and inclusivity across Washington State.
- **National Collaboration Among LGBTQ Commissions**  
In 2024, we continued to strengthen and build relationships with other state LGBTQ Commissions across the United States. There are now six LGBTQ Commissions or equivalents nationwide. States with LGBTQ Commissions or similar entities include Hawaii, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Washington, Virginia, and Maryland. This growing network fosters collaboration, sharing of best practices, and collective advocacy for LGBTQ rights on a national scale.
- **LGBTQ Inclusive Curriculum Implementation**  
Throughout the year, the Commission has engaged in ongoing meetings with the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to review and enhance Washington State's Learning Standards. As part of these discussions, we have worked to ensure that every development or revision of state learning standards includes a thorough screening for biased content, in alignment with the definitions of diversity, equity, and inclusion outlined in RCW 28A.415.443. This process guarantees that these principles are integrated into all new or revised standards.
- **Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN)**  
Throughout the year, staff have participated in monthly Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN) meetings to foster partnerships and collaborations with other organizations and stakeholders.
- **Governor’s Office of Indian Affairs:**  
Director Keating attended the 35<sup>th</sup> annual Centennial Accord.
- **Office of Minority and Women’s Business Enterprises:**  
Director Keating has attended OMWBE’s procurement conference and connected with members of their staff. Meetings will be scheduled in the upcoming weeks to learn more about the implementation of LGBTQ business certification.
- **Department of Enterprise Services:**  
Commission Staff attended meetings throughout the year for the new Cal Anderson Memorial being built on the capitol campus.
- **Attorney General’s Office:**

Staff consistently met with the AG's office to discuss policy, legislation, the youth advisory council, and onboarding commissioners and the Executive Director.

- **Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC):**  
Staff built a partnership with LYAC for the creation of the commission's youth advisory council.
- **Washington Department of Fish and Wildlife:** Sheri, Sawyer, and Sam met with Chris Korsmo with Copper Strategic, a social impact advising group working with the WDFW to conduct listening sessions to better understand how to improve opportunities for use of WDFW water access areas among underserved communities. The Commission worked with them to connect them with the 2SLGBTQIA+ community in WA and help them with this project.

### Programmatic Milestones

- **Statewide LGBTQ Survey**  
Launched in June 2024, our comprehensive LGBTQ survey is providing valuable insights into the lived experiences of 2SLGBTQIA+ Washingtonians. With the survey closing at the end of this month, we are excited to analyze the results to inform future policy and program development.
- **Youth Advisory Council Launch**  
This year, we proudly established our inaugural Youth Advisory Council, now operational with 12 passionate members. The council amplifies youth voices in shaping our initiatives and ensuring their perspectives are central to our mission.
- **Results Washington**  
The Commission presented at the Results Washington Public Performance Review, highlighting the importance and impact of the Youth Advisory Council. A young adult member of the council had the unique opportunity to share their experiences and insights directly with the Governor, demonstrating the power and potential of youth leadership in shaping equitable policies.
- **Summer Fellowship Internship Program**  
The Commission hosted a summer intern from May 28th to July 30th. Tova, who joined us on May 28th, played a pivotal role in enhancing our online presence and resource accessibility. Their contributions included curating and updating resources for our website, as well as providing instrumental support for our social media platforms and newsletter. Tova's work significantly improved the visibility and functionality of our online tools, ensuring better engagement with the communities we serve.

### Communications Milestones

- **Newsletter:** The Commission switched from a weekly to a monthly newsletter in August of 2024 in an effort to increase open-rates, reduce burden on subscribers' inboxes, and conserve staff capacity to improve other communication presences as well, such as social media and direct in-person outreach. This also allows for more depth newsletter articles and greater opportunity for Commissioner and YAC input.

- As of January 22, 2024, the Commission had 686 newsletter recipients. Almost one year later, on January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, the Commission has **2,266 subscribers – a 230% increase.**
- For the January 2024 newsletter, the Commission had an open rate of 50%. Almost one year later, for the January 2025 newsletter we had a **68% open rate.**
- **Social Media:** The Commission currently operates 3 social media pages, Facebook, Instagram, and – newly added in fall 2024 – Threads. We are looking to continue to expand our presence on these pages throughout 2025.
  - **Facebook:** As of January 2025, the Commission has 2, 476 Facebook followers. We increased our follower count by 256 followers between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, a **11% increase.**
  - **Instagram:** As of January 2025, the Commission has 1,476 Instagram followers. We increased our follower count by 609 followers between January 1<sup>st</sup>, 2024, and January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, a **70% increase.**
  - **Threads:** Launched in fall 2024, the Commission currently has **234** Threads followers.

These milestones reflect a year of significant progress and collaboration, positioning the Commission to continue advocating for an equitable and inclusive Washington in the years ahead.

## Strategic Plan

### PRIORITY 1: INTERSECTIONAL CONNECTIONS GOAL

- Intergenerational Committee stood up
- Intergenerational LGBTQIA+ History Month event
- Committee is leading a storytelling collaboration with StoryCorp
- See community connection section of the report for highlights of all the groups we were able to work with throughout the year to continue the intersectional approach of the commission

### PRIORITY 2: STEWARDSHIP GOAL

- Youth Advisory Council established
- Every Commissioner will serve on at least one committee, work group, or task force during the year
- Established committees, work groups, and/or task forces with clear objectives
  - Legislative Priorities Committee Relaunched
  - Communications and Community Outreach Committee Launched
  - Intergenerational Committee Launched

### PRIORITY 3: LGBTQ ELDERS GOAL

- The commission is continuing to work on meeting this strategic goal.

- Intergenerational Committee Launched
- Tracking and monitoring legislation that impacts 2SLGBTQIA+ Elders

#### PRIORITY 4: SUPPORT BASIC NEEDS GOAL

- Survey was launched in June of 2024
  - Results will be provided in June of 2025
- Queer Power Alliance that assessed the needs of 2SLGBTQIA+ residents in South King County

#### PRIORITY 5: TRACK & COUNTER HATE GOAL

- Statement on Capitol Hill raids
- Statement on Anti-LGBTQ attacks across Washington State

We look forward to continuing to work with our commissioners to further meet goals set in our strategic plan in 2025.

## Acknowledgments

Commission staff would like to thank the following individuals and groups for their impact on the Commission in 2024:

*Former Washington Governor Jay Inslee*

*Washington State LGBTQ Commissioners: Commissioners Everett Maroon, Jason Serinus, Amasai Jeke, Matt Landers, Michelle Kelly-Barroga, Alvaro Figueroa, Ebo Barton, Abigayle Coleman, Tobi Hill-Meyer, Darlin Blanco Lozano, Leiyoumi Preciado, Roo Ramos, Omni Romero, Mark Rosén, Jade Thornwood*

*Commissioners that termed out in 2024: Commissioners Steven Sawyer, Dustin Best, Lars Erickson, Nick Franco, Alicia Sojourner, Ranulfo Molina*

*Inaugural LGBTQ Youth Advisory Council class: Ariyanna Fernandez, Desi Quenzer, Emma Blue Esquivel, Felix Painter, Izzy Gonzáles, Jaanvi Ganapathy, James Young, Ling Lomanog, Mateo Acuña*

*Commission Legislative Advisors: Senator Claire Wilson (D-30<sup>th</sup>), Representative Nicole Macri (D-43<sup>rd</sup>), Representative Skyler Rude (R-16<sup>th</sup>)*

*Washington State Legislative LGBTQ Caucus: Senator Marko Liias (D-21<sup>st</sup>), Senator Jamie Pedersen (D-43<sup>rd</sup>), Senator Claire Wilson (D-30<sup>th</sup>), Representative Beth Doglio (D-22<sup>nd</sup>), Speaker Laurie Jinkins (D-27<sup>th</sup>), Representative Nicole Macri (D-43<sup>rd</sup>)*

*Congresswoman Emily Randall (D-6<sup>th</sup>) – former member of the WA State LGBTQ Caucus*

*Washington State Office of Equity & Director Megan Matthews*

*Washington State Women’s Commission & Interim Director Maria Siguenza*



*Washington State Commission on Hispanic Affairs & Director Maria Siguenza*

*Washington State Commission on African American Affairs & Director Ed Prince*

*Washington State Commission on Asian Pacific American Affairs & Interim Director Nam Nguyen*

*Sheri Sawyer, served as interim director of the Commission from January 31<sup>st</sup> – August 16<sup>th</sup>*

*Lola Flores, former policy advisor to the Commission*

## Conclusion

2024 was a year of new programs and change for the Commission, from new staff to new Commissioners, to launching the youth advisory council and statewide survey. Through it all, staff and Commissioners have remained committed to our mission – to identify the needs of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, two-spirit and intersex community in Washington and ensure that they have an effective means of advocating for LGBTQ equity in all aspects of state government.

## Financial Summary