

Equity Office Task Force – Update for the WA State Coalition for Language Access (WASCLA)

Date: Tuesday, February 25, 2020

Prepared by: LinhPhung Huynh, Project Manager, Equity Office Task Force

Dear WASCLA members,

Thank you for staying engaged with the Task Force's work. Below is an update on the Task Force's activities and our plan for the next several months. I have also included information on the legislation to create a Washington State Office of Equity (E2SHB 1783). Although the Task Force is not the author of this legislation, we are following activities closely, so our work can take these outcomes into account.

Please contact me if you have questions or would like further information. I am happy to assist.

Respectfully,

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Task Force Background

The [Equity Office Task Force](#) began its work in July 2019 and is developing a proposal for the creation of a Washington State Office of Equity. Task Force members include representatives of communities, state legislators, and staff from agencies and commissions. Since the project began, the Task Force has opened [public comment](#) and held community forums and [monthly public meetings](#) throughout the state to gather community input and feedback.

Task Force Preliminary Report

The Task Force's preliminary report has been approved for release, and we are excited to share it with our friends and partners. The preliminary report details the Task Force's work thus far and includes recommendations for the Office of Equity's general structure, primary roles, and estimated operating budget. We have shared the report with partners in the community, the Office of the Governor, and select committees of the Legislature. Please share widely with your networks.

Below are links to the report and a summary sheet of recommendations:

- Preliminary Report: [main info page](#) / [direct link to PDF](#)
- Summary of Task Force Recommendations: [direct link to PDF](#)

Update on E2SHB 1783 (creating the WA state office of equity)

The Equity Office Task Force's recommendations informed the language of Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill 1783 ([E2SHB 1783](#)). Representative Mia Gregerson, prime sponsor of the bill, consulted the Task Force for input and feedback as she drafted language, so there is much alignment between the Task Force's recommendations and the bill language.

E2SHB 1783 would establish a Washington State Office of Equity on July 1, 2020. Among other things, E2SHB 1783 would require all executive branch agencies to apply an equity lens to their decision making. 'Equity lens' is defined as: "...providing consideration to the characteristics listed in RCW 49.60.030 [Washington Law Against Discrimination], as well as immigration status and language access, to evaluate the equitable impacts of an agency's policy or program." Furthermore, the bill would require the new Office of Equity to collaborate with Washington State commissions and agencies to identify policy and system barriers to meaningful engagement with communities, including language access. If implemented, E2SHB 1783 would require all executive branch agencies to develop and maintain written language access policies and plans.

E2SHB 1783 has been scheduled for executive session on Wednesday, February 26 (8:00 am) and Friday, February 28 (1:30 pm) in the Senate State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections Committee. If there is a vote on February 26, the bill will be removed from the meeting agenda for February 28. Below are links that may be helpful as you follow legislative activities:

- Link to documents (bill text, proposed amendments, bill report, TVW recording): <https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1783&Year=2019&Initiative=false>
- Senate committee materials (agenda): <https://app.leg.wa.gov/committeeschedules/Home/Documents/26705>

Ongoing Work for the Task Force

The Task Force is funded through July 31, 2020. Our final proposal to the Governor and Legislature is due by July 1, 2020. In the remaining months of this project, the Task Force will continue engaging communities and agency staff to gather input and feedback. The Task Force will form additional recommendations to include in the final proposal, and sees the proposal as a unique opportunity to further define the Task Force's vision and provide guidance to the future Office of Equity.

Our upcoming public meetings are on **Wednesday, March 18** (Skagit Valley area) and **Thursday, April 16** (Spokane). Agendas with times and exact locations will be posted on our [meeting materials website](#). Please [visit our website](#) or contact LinhPhung Huynh, Task Force Project Manager, if you would like to make public comment or submit written comments to the Task Force. If you would like to subscribe to our distribution list to receive meeting details and other notifications, please send an email message to healthequity@sboh.wa.gov.