

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## E2SHB 1783

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As of February 21, 2020

**Title:** An act relating to creating the Washington state office of equity.

**Brief Description:** Creating the Washington state office of equity.

**Sponsors:** House Committee on Appropriations (originally sponsored by Representatives Gregerson, Morgan, Ryu, Lovick, Valdez, Ramos, Thai, Reeves, Slatter, Lekanoff, Peterson, Macri, Entenman, Pettigrew, Bergquist, Callan, Stonier, Orwall, Hudgins, Riccelli, Mead, Senn, Santos, Chapman, Walen, Kloba, Doglio, Tarleton, Pollet, Dolan, Davis, Jinkins, Wylie, Shewmake, Pellicciotti, Fey, Stanford, Sells, Morris, Kilduff, Leavitt, Appleton, Tharinger, Ormsby, Frame and Robinson).

**Brief History:** Passed House: 1/20/20, 56-41.

**Committee Activity:** State Government, Tribal Relations & Elections: 2/13/20.

### Brief Summary of Bill

- Establishes the Washington State Office of Equity (Equity Office), effective July 1, 2020.
- Creates a Community Advisory Board to advise the Equity Office on its priorities and timelines.
- Requires the Equity Office to submit a report to the Legislature and Governor every two years.
- Requires state agencies to designate a diversity, equity, and inclusion liaison; apply an equity lens to agency decision-making; develop plans for diversity, equity, and inclusion and for language access; provide data and information to the Equity Office; and collaborate with the Equity Office to develop performance measures.

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## SENATE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT, TRIBAL RELATIONS & ELECTIONS

**Staff:** Melissa Van Gorkom (786-7491)

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not a part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

**Background:** Various state entities do work around promoting equity and reducing disparities. The Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council on Health Disparities (Council) is one of those entities, established by the Legislature in 2006, which promotes and facilitates communication, coordination, and collaboration among relevant state agencies and communities of color, and the private and public sector, to address health disparities

In 2019, the Legislature directed the Council to convene and staff an Office of Equity Task Force (Task Force) to develop a proposal for creating the Equity Office. The Task Force members include:

- the chair of the Council, who will serve as the chair of the task force;
- two members from the House of Representatives, appointed by the speaker of the House of Representatives;
- two members from the Senate, appointed by the president of the Senate;
- a representative from Office of the Governor, the Office of Financial Management's (OFM's) Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Council, and representative of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer community, each appointed by the Governor;
- a representative from the Office of Minority and Women's Business Enterprise appointed by the director;
- a representative from each ethnic commission, Human Rights Commission, and the Women's Commission, appointed by the directors of the respective commissions;
- the director of the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs, or the director's designee; and
- a member of the disability community, appointed by the chair of the Governor's Committee on Disability Issues and Employment.

The Task Force must submit a preliminary report to the Governor and the Legislature by December 15, 2019, and a final proposal by July 1, 2020. The final proposal must include:

- a mission and vision statement for the Equity Office;
- definition of equity that must be used by the Equity Office to guide its work;
- the organizational structure of the Equity Office;
- a plan to engage executive level management from all agencies;
- mechanisms for facilitating state policy and systems change to promote equity, community outreach and engagement, and establish standards for collection analysis and reporting of disaggregated data regarding race and ethnicity;
- mechanisms for accountability to ensure that performance measures are being met; and
- the estimated cost to carry out the work of the Equity Office.

Task Force members are entitled to reimbursement for expenses incurred in the performance of their duties.

**Summary of Bill:** Washington State Office of Equity Established. The Equity Office is created on July 1, 2020, in the office of the Governor to promote access to equitable opportunities and resources that reduce disparities and improve outcomes statewide across all sectors of government. The work of the Equity Office must be guided by principles of equity as set forth in the bill. The Governor must appoint a director who will:

- employ and supervise staff; and
- oversee the administration, programs and policies of the Equity Office in accordance with guiding principles.

Office Duties. The Equity Office must facilitate state policy and systems change to promote equitable policies, practices, and outcomes through:

- assisting agencies in applying an equity lens to agency decision making through various means;
- promoting community outreach and engagement by staffing a Community Advisory Board (Board) and collaborating with specified state agencies;
- collaborating with OFM and Department of Enterprise Services to develop policies and provide technical assistance and training for agencies on maintaining a diverse, inclusive, and culturally sensitive workforce;
- collaborating with Results Washington and agencies to establish certain standards for data, create performance measures, and develop an online performance dashboard;
- collaborating with OFM to track disparities in public employment;
- coordinating with the Office of Privacy and Data Protection to address cybersecurity and data protection, including limiting data requests to protect the data of vulnerable populations; and
- promoting accountability through agency performance reports and rules establishing enforcement mechanisms.

The Equity Office must submit a report to the Legislature and Governor by July 1, 2022, and every two years thereafter, that includes a summary of its work, as well as an overview of agency compliance and an equity analysis of the makeup of the Board. The Equity Office must consider recommendations submitted by the Task Force when carrying out its duties.

Equity Office Powers. The Equity Office may:

- provide technical assistance to agencies;
- conduct research projects and policy analyses, as needed;
- develop policy positions and legislative initiatives;
- fulfill external data requests, as resources allow;
- receive gifts, grants and endowments from public and private sources; and
- adopt rules as necessary.

Community Advisory Board. The Board is created to advise the Equity Office on its priorities and timelines and provide guidance on standards and performance measures. The Director appoints members to the Board. Members of the Board are entitled to compensation and reimbursement for travel expenses.

State Agencies. All agencies must:

- designate a diversity, equity, and inclusion liaison, within existing resources;
- apply an equity lens to assess existing and proposed policies, service delivery, programs, practices, and budget decisions;
- develop and submit diversity, equity, and inclusion plans;
- develop and maintain written language access policies and plans;
- collaborate with the Equity Office to establish performance measures;
- provide data and information to the Equity Office as requested; and
- submit a response to the Equity Office's report on agency performance.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed, except for section 3—relating to the establishment of the Equity Office—which takes effect July 1, 2020.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: The Task Force has allowed us to connect with communities and listen and collect feedback which is reflected in the language in the bill. The support for this has been overwhelming at the Task Force meetings. Agency directors also want this office as a valuable resource to serve as a diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) expert and provide resources for agencies. Often times government is in a space which communities may not feel like they are heard and this Office will provide a space for that. Our state has one of the fastest growing economies in the nation but there is a huge divide by the haves and the have nots. Seattle Times reported that Seattle households headed by a white person have a net worth income of \$450,000, a Latino households it is about \$90,000, for black families its \$23,000. The number one strategy identified Governors Poverty Reduction workgroup is to address poverty in the state and to understand and take action to undo structural racism and the effects of historical trauma in state policies, programs and practices. Fairness, equity, and justice are not abstract concepts, they are concepts that affect my community every day in tangible ways. The lack of a centralized approach to equity and diversity has created multiple definitions and approaches, none of which really identify the assets and needs of communities most marginalized by our government. Nor do any of those approaches have the power to make systemic change. There is a responsibility to address policies and oversight so agencies are held accountable. The proposed legislation to create an Office of Equity would begin a centralized process for embedding equity throughout our government. The Office would remove silos between departments that are usually at odds with one another for funds but have the same goal of a vibrant economy and community living in Washington State.

CON: The spirit of discussion on equity is important but this bill is not the way. This is bureaucracy upon bureaucracy. There are already Commissions, adding more government would make the problems worse and not better. If the government wants to promote reducing disparities it should focus on reforming K-12 education to provide access to all children so that regardless of income they have access to quality education and support. This bill is not productive and is patronizing to families like mine who have overcome many challenges. Outcome based methodology means that you will be using a measurement tool based on what people look like. Last year the people rejected the initiative regarding affirmative action. If you want to make things fair start with the qualifications for a job or GPA to get into college, not looks. We are all Americans and should not be looking at someone's race.

OTHER: Voters passed Initiative 200 (I-200) in 1998 and last year voters reaffirmed I-200. Washington has rejected racial preferences and upheld the principle of equality for all. Basic American value has been cherished by people in all walks of life regardless of party affiliations. Voters in 34 out of 39 counties and 30 out of 49 legislative districts voted to support for the Civil Rights Act and reaffirm I-200. To respect the voters will, we suggest

changes to make sure that voters requests will be counted and that there will be accountability in the Office. There should be a requirement that policies and mechanisms developed by the Office are in compliance with the Civil Rights Act, and the director should be jointly selected from the House and Senate and only serve four-year terms.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Representative Mia Gregerson, Prime Sponsor; Senator Manka Dhingra; Carlos Jimenez, Centro Cultural Mexicano; Angie Hinojos Yusuf, Centro Cultural Mexicano; RaShelle Davis, Governor's Office; Velma Veloria, Equity in Education Coalition.

CON: Sharon Hanek, citizen; Anthony Mixer, citizen; Isaac Yi, citizen.

OTHER: Linda Yang, citizen; Kan Qiu, citizen.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** PRO: Alex Hur, OneAmerica; David Mendoza, Progreso; Christianna Clinton, Poverty Reduction Workgroup; Allison Spector, Equity Office Task Force LGBTQ+; Lori Pfingst, Senior Director, Department of Social and Health Services; Charles Adkins, citizen.