

Task Force Appointed

Lieutenant Governor Cyrus Habib and House Speaker Laurie Jinkins have announced the appointment of members of the Legislative Task Force on Social Equity in Marijuana. The appointments recently announced include the following members:

- Senator Rebecca Saldana
- Rep. Kelly Chambers
- Rep. Melanie Morgan
- Paula Sardinias, Commission on African American Affairs
- Yasmin Trudeau, Office of the Attorney General
- Kendrick Stewart, Department of Commerce
- Keeley Perez, Commission on Hispanic Affairs
- Craig Bill, Governor's Office of Indian Affairs
- Ollie Garrett, Liquor and Cannabis Board
- Cherie MacLeod, City of Seattle, representing the Association of Washington Cities
- Michelle Merriweather, Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle, representing the African American community
- Joe Solorio, representing a labor organization involved in the cannabis industry
- David Mendoza, representing the Latinx community
- Raft Hollingsworth, representing a cannabis producer/processor
- Monica Martinez, representing a cannabis producer/processor
- Tamara Berkley, representing a cannabis retailer
- Pablo Gonzales, representing a cannabis retailer

An additional member representing the Senate Republican Caucus is expected to be appointed as well. The Task Force will elect a chair from among its legislative members at its first meeting. Staff support for the task force is being led by Christy Hoff of the Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities. LCB staff have been assembling material to provide to the task force to provide background information and context to assist the task force in its work.

COVID-19 Delays Launch of Task Force

In a recent communication with legislative leaders, staff for Gov. Jay Inslee has estimated that the work of the task force will be started later than originally expected due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting restrictions on work, gatherings, activities, among other factors. While the legislation drafted in February envisioned a first meeting of the task force by July 1, it now appears likely it will not be feasible to hold the first meeting until the Fall. Consequently, the Task Force's report to the Legislature and the Governor, originally set for December 1, will also be delayed.

Communities of Color Outreach Planned

The LCB entered into a contract with Cultures Connecting, a Seattle-area firm headed by Caprice Hollins, who has previously conducted implicit bias staff training for the agency, to coordinate an outreach effort aimed at engaging communities of color. In May, the day before a deadline arrived which imposes limits on state agency contracting for personal services, LCB contracted with Cultures Connecting to organize a series of community meetings. While these meetings were initially envisioned as in-person meetings at several locations around the state, the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic is impacting these efforts as well. It remains to be seen what form these meetings will take.

An initial couple of planning meetings have been held, but the work has yet to begin in earnest. The purpose of the contract is two-fold: first, the LCB hopes the discussions with people from communities of color will teach agency staff more about perceptions and concerns people in the community have about the agency and its operations generally, and second, to help inform the agency about the best way to structure and prepare for launch of the social equity program. There will be much more information to share when plans begin to take more specific shape in the weeks ahead.