

Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force

Meeting Minutes for 5/19/2022 9:00 AM- 12:00

Virtual Meeting
[TVW recording](#)

Minutes (for review and confirmation at next meeting, August 18, 2022)

I. Welcome and Attendance Meeting convened by Rep. Mia Gregerson and DSHS Secretary Jilma Meneses

Voting Members

- Rep. Michelle Caldier, (R) Washington State House of Representatives
- Kelly Cooper, Department of Health
- Sen. Perry Dozier, (R) Washington State Senate
- Sen. Manka Dhingra, (D) Washington State Senate
- Rep. Carolyn Eslick, (R) Washington State House of Representatives
- Veronica Gallardo, Office of the Superintendent for Public Instruction
- Sen. Chris Gildon, (R) Washington State Senate
- Rep. Mia Gregerson, (D) Washington State House of Representatives (Legislative Co-Chair)
- Jasmine Vasavada for Diane Klontz, Department of Commerce (Co-Chair Advisory)
- Jennie Fitzpatrick for Mark Kucza, Department of Corrections
- Jilma Meneses, Department of Social and Health Services (Executive Co-Chair)
- Sen. Joe Nguyen, Washington State Senate (D) Washington State Senate (new member)
- Rep. Strom Peterson, (D) Washington State House of Representatives
- Tim Probst, Employment Security Department (Co-Chair Advisory)
- Nicole Rose, Department of Children Youth and Families
- Carli Schniffner, State Board for Community and Technical Colleges

Quorum? Yes No

Non-Voting Members

- Mystique Hurtado, Governor's Office Indian Affairs
- Anna Minor, Office of Financial Management
- Nam Nguyen, Asian Pacific Islander Commission
- Ed Prince, Commission on African American Affairs
- Maria Siguenza, Commission on Hispanic Affairs
- Tony Bowie, Economic Security Administration Secretary (new member)
- Manny Santiago, Washington State LGBTQ Commission (membership pending approval of SB 5929)

Staff

- , Office of the Governor
- Babs Roberts, Department of Social and Health Services

II. House Keeping DSHS Babs Roberts

- **Rules of Engagement:** Agreement on how we conduct ourselves in this meeting.
 - Maintain a respectful body language, tone and volume when sharing my opinion
 - Value the many different sources of knowledge; listening to the entire message without editorializing or interrupting
 - Act in ways that edify the group's self-esteem

- *Seek first to understand before being understood*
- *Be honest and explain why*
- *Always assume good intentions; give people the benefit of the doubt*
- *Look for places to agree, connect and support – it helps us to get better solutions*
- *Make it a safe environment to share – no personal attacks*
- *Be willing to listen and acknowledge there are other points of view*
- *Use the “time out” gesture to call a “Time Out”*
- *Listen to the entire message, literally and mentally*
 - *Don’t interrupt – we are modeling respectful behavior*
 - *Our listening implies that we care, even if we don’t agree*
- **Housekeeping:**
 - *LEWPRO members are designated “panelists” and will have the ability to participate. You can raise your hand to speak, ask questions or to vote.*
 - *All other “attendees” have been muted and chat function is turned off.*
 - *Can request to participate in public comment periods by raising their hand.*
 - *If you have questions during the meeting, the Q&A function is the best place to put those.*

III. **Task Force Business - Rep. Mia Gregerson, DSHS Sec. Meneses and Babs Roberts**

- *Review and approval of [February 17, 2022 meeting minutes](#) – minutes were approved.*

IV. **Public Comment**

- *None at this time*

V. **Updates on Request Legislation – DSHS Babs Roberts**

- *[SB 5929](#) was approved to include LGBTQ and Women’s commission effective in June, sent letters for representatives and also sending a request to the Office of Equity. There was a directive for us to add with someone with expertise to the advisory committee (PRWG) and working on finding a rep from there as well.*

VI. **Enhancing/Modernizing LEWPRO Work- Rep. Gregerson, DSHS Sec. Meneses**

- *Facilitation*
 - *Working on hiring a facilitator for this meeting, in the process.*
- *[Work Plan draft](#) – Babs Roberts, DSHS*
 - *Action item, reference material with links for the taskforce to review, who is responsible for the work, prepping and presenting, and there is a “What is needed” column.*
 - *Includes plans for each quarterly meeting.*
 - *May - Currently showing PRWG alignment and bill alignment. DSHS team will be working on a matrix that will clearly identify what work has already happened (success) and what work still needs to be done and next steps.*
 - *August - Good time to discuss agency request legislation and ideas from community and stakeholders.*
 - *November- Working with Office of Equity – client voice committee and begin work plan for 2023.*
 - *Members liked the work plan, however, chairs are still requesting feedback to see who we might be missing, want to be inclusive.*

VII. Legislative Session 2022 Review – Related bills – DSHS Babs Roberts

- [Tracking document](#)
 - Bills done by legislators, stakeholders and agency request legislation. Very large number of bills that can be connected to poverty reduction work.
 - A number of bills did pass; legal financial obligations HB 1412, incentivizing affordable housing HB 1643, Rep. Gregerson around digital equity HB 1723, and improving human services HB 1755. Bills in the senate around protecting Washingtonians from out of network healthcare costs, compensation for those with lived experience. Also looked through provisos in the budget to also tie it to poverty reduction.
 - Plan to build a matrix that tracks this tool and use it as a planning document for other items on the 5-year plan to move those items forward.
 - Interested in how to strengthen tool or additional bills/provisos that are missing, interested in your feedback, available on the LEWPRO site.
 - Jasmine Vasavada - this is only a supplemental year, some items takes years to move through the session, example – Heal Act took several years to move through.
 - Rep. Gregerson – are we interested in tracking or identifying bills that might make poverty worse? Sec. Meneses asked taskforce members to alert group if they notice any. Will talk with Lori and her team to see if they can add an additional tab.
 - Poverty Subcabinet and LEWPRO must collaborate on moving work forward.
 - 2075 was vetoed, however, we were able to get office lobbies open in Feb 28, 2022 for full on demand walk in services, similar our pre-COVID model (with social distancing).
 - We are also looking at improving our infrastructure and the telephony options around our call center to reduce the wait times.
 - Still seeing a larger than normal vacancy rate for staff, but are still making progress on wait times, at lot closer to 30 minutes but not there yet. Trying to simplify things for clients, like automation and a virtual hold option with a text.
 - Also, want to improve how to modernize our systems when submitting paperwork. Working on process improvement to simplify the benefit interview process.
 - Digital platforms are critical for our clients.

VIII. Poverty Reduction Work Group Update - PRWG steering committee co-chair Juanita Maestas, ESD Tim Probst ESD, Dept. of Commerce Emily Grossman

- Equitable Poverty Reduction – PRWG led the group through an exercise on what is most important to move forward over the coming legislative session.
- Came up with a large list of topics raised, but these are the themes that emerged:
 - Easier and more dignified access
 - Eligibility coordination/consolidation across programs
 - Fiscal cliffs/smooth reduction in benefits as income increases
 - Need for a single, unified, and modern system (not silos)
 - BIPOC and other targeted demographics
 - Trauma informed care
 - Voice of lived experience
- Potential action items (not in particular order)

- *Interim steps to coordinate the existing systems:*
 - *Peer navigators to help others navigate our systems by those have experienced poverty and address digital equity for the navigators*
 - *Make SB 5241 governor's request legislation, codify no wrong door.*
 - *Propose federal request for a universal eligibility and limitation of fiscal cliffs.*
- *Larger steps to work towards a new system:*
 - *Write a state bill and propose a federal bill to create a major system overhaul.*
 - *Develop legislation to further increase funding for housing, integrate it into the universal eligibility approach.*
 - *Write a bill officially adopting the goal of creating livable wage jobs.*
- *Other steps addressing key single issues in a coordinated way:*
 - *Develop legislation or proviso to increase grants for BIPOC organizations and CBOs*
 - *Develop a bill to create trauma-informed care training for all customer-facing staff at agencies that serve people experiencing poverty, and also address secondary trauma.*
 - *Write a bill addressing COVID's impact on students, to make all students experience poverty automatically eligible for the Washington College Grant.*
- *Discussion*
 - *Sec. Meneses - The subcabinet is looking at higher education to pass on information that folks are on TANF or SNAP so they don't have to complete FASFA applications.*
 - *Interested in interim housing solutions while we are working on long term plan.*
 - *Rep. Peterson also want to make sure we are easing the eligibility but not easing ineligibility. Intern looked at models for easing eligibility, he will share it with this group.*
 - *Rep. Gregerson – As we struggle through large projects and political landscapes we want to look at humanizing our people - focusing on wellness and dignity.*
 - *Tim Probst -Will work closely with Lori and Lindsay and their team along with poverty subcabinet.*

IX. TANF WorkFirst Updates - DSHS Babs Roberts

- [TANF Spending Plan](#)
 - *Tracking well, only a couple of places where we see some issues.*
 - *The TANF grant is tracking higher than we anticipated.*
 - *Also, PEAFF (funded by state and federal) is also running higher than anticipated. This program is for families with children who were on benefits for the month of May (TANF or Basic Food), and had income under 75% FPL at \$127 per child. Anticipating closing the program down at the end of May.*
 - *We are working very closely with WorkFirst partners to make sure they have what they need so that clients have access to WorkFirst services, but also understand that there is a pandemic which might be good cause for non-participation.*
 - *Looking at support services for diapers or transportation for this year and implementing for next fiscal year.*
 - *Admin costs are running higher than spending plan and we will manage that within the department, looks to be good through the end of the state fiscal year.*

X. Public Comment

- Laurie Lippold wanted to say thank you for all the work you are doing. Very grateful of the PRWG and steering committee and want to make sure we are all working together. In particular, peer navigation has been crucial in child welfare (Parent Allies).
- If folks tune in later and want to inquire, they can reach out to Babs directly, at babette.roberts@dshs.wa.gov.

XI. Good of the Order

- Next meeting date: Tentative – Aug 18, 2022 from 9am to noon
- Kelly Cooper (DOH) - Thrilled with the work plan and laying out work for the year. All departments are thinking about decision packages and agency request legislation and it will be great to see how those align.
- Rep. Peterson - Curious if there is a way track what is happening around the state, looking at home town impacts on poverty?
 - Sec. Meneses - If you hear about initiatives that impact poverty, please bring this forward, even local ordinances.
- Jasmine Vasavada – Legislative budget leaders put \$ten million in Dept. of Commerce budget to look at housing needs, wanted to make sure that partners know about that money. Interested if there is alignment with the peer navigators recommendation.
- Rep. Gregerson – There are questions about what we are doing for poverty reduction short term vs. long term, specifically housing. Is anyone able to speak to that?
 - Jasmine Vasavada- Dept. of Commerce is forming a subcabinet to work more closely with local governments. There is \$45 million coming in July to fund those partnerships bringing in short term housing solutions locally to get focused on safe temporary housing, with some long term low income housing.
 - Emily Grossman, Dept. of Commerce –Have already been brainstorming around housing, in the past there were shorter term housing that don't exist in the market now. Interested in researching and reviewing the ability for safe temporary housing and examples in the country (San Francisco for example).
- Rep. Gregerson – Request from this team around budget, once we get the costs for IT requests, it can be very difficult for legislators to invest in solutions around process improvements without buy-in from other agencies on “why” it’s important to invest now.
 - For example, ID verification for ESD unemployment benefits, very expensive, need to know if there are other agencies that can use this technology.
 - DSHS has a Chief Technology Advisor who will be looking at IT improvements within DSHS but also coordinate with other agencies.
 - Tim Probst – PRWG willing to do more presentations.

XII. Adjourn