



## Frontline Communities | Equity Centered



## State Agency Directors and Leaders of Color Meet

In Tacoma last week, Washington state agency Directors met with leaders of color from around the state. Various community members discussed the health and environmental inequities and injustices faced by their respective communities and elevated Front And Centered principles for environmental justice. State officials engaged in dialogue on how our state can best work together with communities of color to solve our most pressing environmental justice concerns. This meeting was organized by Front and Centered in partnership with Director of Ecology Maia Bellon. Other officials included Secretary of Health John Weisman, Department of Agriculture Deputy Director Kirk Robinson, and State Board of Health Executive Director Michelle Davis.

Front & Centered shared some of our priorities including [Concentrated Animal Feeding Operation permits \(CAFO\)](#), a increased focus on equity under the [Model Toxics Control Act \(MTCA\)](#), and the addition of a statewide environmental justice analysis and an oversight board.

State officials heard about the value of engaging with the Latino community in Yakima, especially regarding industrial water pollution from Concentrated Animal Feeding Operations, increased participation by communities of color in the rulemaking process, and the importance of translating agency materials for the many linguistically isolated households in our State. The many community members from Tacoma brought up lead exposure and environmental concerns with the Northwest Detention Center. Members of the community spoke about the fact that the Detention Center is located at the edge of a Superfund site and the potential water quality issues that could result from the nearby toxic waste.

State officials responded to these concerns by agreeing that more work needs to be done in their respective departments. Officials from the Department of Ecology discussed their role in toxic cleanups and pollution prevention, health officials discussed water quality issues in Tacoma and their role reviewing health impacts of proposed bills in the legislature, and officials from the Department of Agriculture pointed out their potential impact on farmworkers and pesticide exposure.

Collectively, the state officials agreed that environmental justice principles must be taken seriously and that state agencies can raise awareness of the health and environmental issues that disproportionately affect communities of color. One of the actions state agencies can take is to collect more data on communities of color so they better understand how their policies impact those communities and so they can more efficiently target specific communities with their efforts.

Many steps have yet to be taken and we are all looking for opportunities to shape our collective work and goals. We also acknowledge that the recently proposed state Clean Air Rule has an environmental justice oversight board, albeit limited in scope, is the first of its kind in the state.

This first meeting was a strong first step towards environmental equity in Washington. As state officials heard from our communities, if policies intended to help us are drafted without us, they will not impact us, and ensure we all have access to a healthy, thriving and cleaner environment.

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