

# COMMUNITY UPDATE

## Recent Happenings

The Washington State Board of Health (Board) met on [October 9, 2023](#) (watch the [full meeting](#)) in Wenatchee:

- Members received an [update](#) from the [Chelan-Douglas Health District](#). The update discussed the population served by the District, its programs and services, challenges, and future direction.
- Members voted to initiate rulemaking for [Chapter 246-650 WAC](#) to add [two conditions](#) to the newborn screening panel.

The Board also met on [November 8, 2023](#) (watch the [full meeting](#)) in Tumwater:

- The Board announced the appointment of [Member Hayes](#) as new Board Chair, replacing outgoing Member Grellner. [Paj Nandi](#) is joining the Board, filling the role of “[a person with background in Health and Sanitation](#)”.
- Each year the Board reviews its [legislative statement](#). The purpose of the legislative statement is to guide staff activities on priority topics during the legislative session. They did not take any action during this meeting. The Board will review and adopt its statement at the January 10, 2024, meeting.
- Part of the Board’s [strategic plan](#) is to monitor the health effects of climate change. The Board hosted a [storytelling panel](#) to engage and learn how climate change is impacting Tribes and [communities that are overburdened](#) in Washington state. The panel consisted of four members; Elaine Harvey, Watershed Department Manager, [Columbia River Inter-Tribal Fish Commission](#) ([presentation](#)); Paulina Lopez, Executive Director, [Duwamish River Community Coalition](#) ([presentation](#)); Ryan Oelrich, Executive Director, [Priority Spokane & Spokane City Council Member](#) ([presentation](#)); Sue Sullivan, Environmental Health Manager, [Whatcom County](#) Health Department ([presentation](#)).

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The [Somali Health Board](#) invited Board staff to present at their Fall Quarterly meeting in November. Staff were able to share updates, hear about the work of the Somali Health Board, and learn more about issues impacting the health of the Somali community in Washington state.



The Board held virtual meetings of its two **standing policy subcommittees**:

The [Environmental Health Committee](#) met on December 15. Committee Members previewed upcoming Board meeting agenda items and heard updates on rulemaking projects, including Sanitary Control of Shellfish.

The [Health Promotion Committee](#) met on December 7 and received an informational briefing on Oral Health Equity in Washington, along with a Legislative Session check in and updates on current rulemaking.

The Subcommittees will hold meetings for 2024 on the first Thursday of the month (Health Promotion) and the second Thursday of the month (Environmental Health).

## GOVERNOR'S INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HEALTH DISPARITIES

The [Governor's Interagency Council on Health Disparities](#) held a meeting on December 14, 2023, at the Tukwila Community Center. The agenda and materials are [located here](#).

The Council is an interagency workgroup responsible for creating a state policy action plan and recommendations to eliminate health inequities by race/ethnicity and gender in Washington. The State Board of Health is a member of the Council. The Board also supports the Governor by providing operational support to the Council.

Since last year, the Council has focused on a redesign project that could change the Council's name, purpose, membership, and responsibilities. The Council connected with governmental and community partners to learn how the Council could lead or support unified goals for optimal health and wellbeing. Partners have offered insight on how to better engage communities as well as align with partners' priorities to address health inequities and advance health justice and equity. In October 2023, the Council submitted a redesign proposal to the Governor's Office for consideration and it is currently under review. Revising the Council's statute and operating budget would also require action by state lawmakers during the legislative session.

More information about the project and the Council's proposal is available on the [Redesign webpage](#). The Council has approved a schedule for 2024 regular meetings.

You can always find the latest meeting information on the [Council's website](#), including any changes or additions.





## BITS AND PIECES

Please join the Board in welcoming our new Equity and Engagement Manager, Ashley Bell. Ashley is coming to us from the Department of Health. Throughout her career, Ashley has worked with rural, BIPOC and LGBTQIA+ communities and has a strong interest in policy.



Check out our new [Welcome to Public Health](#) resource!

## OPPORTUNITIES TO BE INVOLVED

### • Upcoming Meetings:

- Join us in 2024! We'd love to see you at our meetings this year. [The Board is meeting in January, March, June, August, October and November.](#)
- Our [next scheduled Board meeting](#) is Wednesday, January 10, 2024, in Tumwater. There will be virtual and in-person options. American Sign Language and Spanish interpretation services will be available. **Physical meeting location:** Washington State Department of Health, 111 Israel Road S.E., Tumwater, WA 985011, Building: Town Center 2, Rooms 166 & 167

### • Participation in Rulemaking Work:

- Board staff have begun rulemaking work to amend the Board's school auditory screening standards, [Chapter 246-760 WAC](#), in response to a petition received in August. For more information about this rulemaking work, you can go to [the Board's website](#) or [subscribe to the School Auditory Screening Rule email list](#).

[Email the Board](#) anytime with public comment on any of our work or issues that matter to you.

To learn more about the Board or be involved in our work, contact [Hannah Haag, Board Community Outreach Coordinator](#)

