

Washington State Employees'
LGBTQ+ Business Resource Group

RAIN 

Rainbow Alliance and Inclusion Network (RAIN)

RAIN exists to help Washington State create safe and inclusive workplaces where every LGBTQ+ employee can bring their full authentic selves to work, enabling them to do their best work every day for the people of Washington. It is a business resource group that advises state agencies on how to create inclusive environments for LGBTQ+ employees and customers.



RAIN AT DEI SUMMIT

By Elizabeth Fontanilla, DES



RAIN members staff a table at the DEI summit

The 2020 Washington State Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Summit, organized by the State Diversity Equity and Inclusion Council and co-chaired by RAIN member Marika Barto, was held at the Greater Tacoma Convention Center on January 21-22.

During the opening ceremony, keynote speaker Dr. Karen Johnson invited business resource group (BRG) members on stage to celebrate the work they are doing; several RAIN members took part in this recognition. On the second day of the summit, Dr. Johnson invited BRG members back on stage during her opening remarks to illustrate keynote speaker Dr. Randal Pinkett's encouragement for communities to come together and form an intersectional tapestry to get to know one another and increase understanding. RAIN recognition continued after lunch when Governor Inslee addressed the crowd, quoting members Tracey Carlos and Jasper Marino on why BRGs matter.

The Outreach and Communications sub-committee organized a RAIN information table for the conference. Joined by other RAIN members throughout both days, Tracey Carlos and Ariel Kay passed out flyers, answered questions, and signed up conference attendees for our newsletter distribution list.

Twelve hundred state employees participated in the conference, learning on day one about implicit bias, micro-aggressions, privilege, and engaging in courageous conversations about race. The first day also included The Defamation Experience, a three-phase interactive diversity program: courtroom drama play, deliberation where the audience was the jury, and facilitated post-show discussion. On the second day, participants divided into three tracks to explore topics aligned with where they were on their DEI journey.

RAIN member Annette Harrison presented on the Department of Labor and Industries (LNI) Cultural Dashboard and how the agency is engaging their teams to take action on employee survey results using a DEI lens. She is the enterprise measurement and communication analyst for LNI's Office of Strategy and Performance and has a passion for data storytelling.

As we continue working on the mission of RAIN to create safe and inclusive workplaces, perhaps by this time next year, Annette will be telling a story of progress for her agency and others.

See you at next year's DEI Summit!

Questions? Contact RAIN@ofm.wa.gov

GOVERNOR VISITS RAIN

By Tracey Carlos, LNI

RAIN was lucky enough to have Governor Jay Inslee come speak at our January general meeting. This meeting marked the third anniversary of the kickoff for our LGBTQ+ business resource group. Governor Inslee came to thank us for our efforts to make Washington more inclusive.

Governor Inslee signed Directive 16-11 on June 23, 2016 which contained instruction for the creation of RAIN (then referred to as the LGBTQ+ Employee Resource Group) to gain insight from state employees on how to promote diversity and inclusion. This group has been directed to identify and share best practices already in place in parts of the state as well as expand Seattle's "Safe Place" program. He signed this directive not only because it was the right thing to do, but also because it was the smart thing to do. Minimizing the stress of being out or transitioning at work makes for a more productive workforce.

The Governor looked back on how far Washington has come since 1989, when he was first elected to the Legislature. While there has been a huge cultural shift, there is still more change needed. Shaping a culture is ultimately done one person at a time, and our work is making that possible.

Our state has had a lot of firsts. We were possibly the first to set up a LGBTQ+ business resource group, the first to offer a public healthcare option, gender equity pay, and long-term care in America. The Governor officiated the first Washington LGBTQ+ marriage ceremony himself, at the Governor's mansion. He signed into law the banning of conversion therapy, and appointed Manny Santiago Executive Director of the LGBTQ Commission last year.

RAIN members have had the privilege to benefit from the support of our governor and will continue following his instruction to do more to shift our culture into one of more diversity, equity and inclusion.



(L-R): Sepha Weaver, Safe Places co-chair (LNI), Sandra Schaefer, Administrative Liaison (DRS), Jacob Towle, Safe Places co-chair (DSHS), Tracey Carlos, Outreach and Communications co-chair (LNI), Allison Spector, Administrative Liaison (DOT), Governor Jay Inslee, Elizabeth Fontanilla, RAIN co-chair (DES), Ryan Douglas, Outreach and Communications co-chair (DFI), Marisa Sanchez-Reed, Best Practices co-chair (SAO), Ariel Kay, RAIN co-chair (ESD), Jasper Marino, Best Practices co-chair (ESD) and John Wiesman, RAIN Executive Sponsor (DOH).

Questions? Contact RAIN@ofm.wa.gov

GETTING THE “X”

By Ellis Starrett, DOL

More than just another gender designation for Washington State

It was 4:47 p.m. on Nov. 13, 2019 and I was standing in a crowded licensing office in Lacey, WA with nothing but my cell phone and my enhanced driver license (EDL). The last time I had been there I was beating the rush to upgrade my license to an EDL, ahead of the October 2020 deadline. This time I was much more excited and celebratory. I was there not only to make a change that would make my license more accurate, but to participate in one of the first statewide policy changes since WA State included gender identity and expression in its antidiscrimination laws (not to overlook the Department of Health’s inclusion of the “X” designation on birth certificates in 2018). Many believe the change will help transgender and intersex people have greater access to housing, medical care, social services, and gender-affirming treatment.

That day, the Department of Licensing began issuing identification cards, instruction permits, and driver licenses with the “X” gender designation, in addition to “M” and “F”. The lesser known change that came along with the “X” option in Washington was the removal of the requirement to provide medical documentation as a form of gender verification, which had been a barrier for people wanting to change their gender designation in the past.

Unlike those who successfully navigated a gender designation change in the past, I had previously not had the option of having a gender designation that felt like an accurate reflection of my gender identity. Visiting the licensing office in November, I knew that reality had changed. I was waiting in line to meet with the lobby coordinator who helps route people to the appropriate line in busy offices or on busy days. Michelle politely asked me what she could help me with. “I’m just here to get an X on my license,” I told her. “Oh wonderful!” she beamed at me. “What documents do you have with you today?” I told her I had a current EDL and put it on the counter in front of me. “Perfect. That is all you should need. You can come over here to our Express Lane. We opened one up because it is so busy today.” I nodded. It was in fact my second attempt that day. I had come in during my lunch hour, but there was a 2-hour wait. “REAL ID is coming,” she said, gesturing to the packed lobby. “It looks like you’re prepared.”



All in all, the visit took me 10 minutes in the Express Lane and 5 minutes for the transaction. The licensing representative helped me when I got to the counter, asking me the same questions Michelle had, and handed me a form. I checked the box with the “X” next to it, signed my name. “What day is it?” I said before laughing. “Never mind.” I had been looking forward to that date for months, and I put it down and handed the form to the representative.

Nine days later, I received my new EDL. When I saw the “X” next to “SEX” it felt oddly overwhelming. Odd because it shouldn’t matter what society tells me about my gender, but it does. Especially when we have made gender mean so much in our society. Misalignment of a person’s gender expression and gender designation can result in harassment and physical violence, a very real and terrifying reality for so many people. But it is not just the passionately prejudiced that end up harming people who experience this misalignment.

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It is the systems and processes we have put in place to access housing, medical care, employment, social services, and so much more. And it is why the “X” is so much more than a gender-affirming designation on mine and others’ licenses.

During the DOL’s rulemaking process, the agency was contacted by organizations working to update their systems. “We are going to have people walking in with an X on their license, and we need to be ready for that,” said one agency partner over the phone as they discussed the changes they were making to prepare. The more I heard about these conversations the more I realized: even though transgender and intersex people have existed throughout history, and [WA state law](#) protects people of all gender expressions and identities, the “X” creates a mechanism in society’s systems that says “DO SOMETHING.” It is this mechanism that can help fuel less obvious changes.

What changes, you might ask? Currently, even if transgender women have successfully navigated the hurdles of getting health insurance, they still have to fight to get coverage for prostate exams and preventative treatments for testicular cancer and prostate cancer, to name a few. The same is true for transgender men who are systematically opted out of pregnancy care, mammograms, and preventative care for ovarian and breast cancer. Intersex people have experienced these barriers to health care long before binary gender designation changes were legal and these legal changes have done little to help when it comes to access to health care. With the “X” designation, organizations that provide health care-related services or offer health insurance will be required to reassess their gender-assuming/gender-specific processes in order to avoid discriminating against people with the “X” designation. Some state agencies are already doing necessary work to ensure their systems don’t opt genders out of particular health care treatments or questionnaires as a result of the “X” designation interrupting those processes.

Another area where the “X” helps to create system change is with public restrooms. The “X” will require schools, places of employment, and other businesses and

organizations that fall under public bathroom regulations to grapple with the reality that it is not just transgender women and men who need to use their facilities. Equally accessible accommodations are required to be made under WA state law for those who do not identify as exclusively female or exclusively male. WA state agencies, with help from RAIN, are adopting gender-affirming bathroom policies and restroom signage to ensure that all restrooms are accessible to transgender and intersex employees and customers. Many cities and private employers are following suit. The City of Seattle has adopted gender-affirming bathroom policies and has even created all-gender restrooms in some facilities. These measures help to protect all transgender and intersex people when accessing public restrooms.

My point is not to provide all the evidence and information related to gender-affirming policy changes taking place in WA State, or in the growing number of states that offer the “X” designation on driver licenses and identification cards. My point is simply to say, when I got my license back with the “X” on it, it wasn’t just my little genderqueer heart rejoicing for a license that affirmed who I am. I have been a policy nerd for a long time and I understand that very little change occurs without good policy behind it. The “X” designation is a policy decision that will result in REAL CHANGE for people in WA State. It may take those changes time, it may take pushing of advocacy organizations and people with the “X” designation, but these changes are coming.

In times like these, when proposed federal and out-of-state legislation threatens the progress of LGBTQ+ rights across our nation, the “X” designation should be all the more cherished. This change deserves to be celebrated for all that it is and all that it will be.

Note: I would like to thank all of the employees at the Department of Licensing who worked in support of the “Gender X” project. It was an agency wide effort, taken up by employees who were inspired to support the civil rights of all people of WA State.

LGBTQ COMMISSION

By Tracey Carlos, LNI



WASHINGTON STATE LGBTQ COMMISSION



FIRST MEETING

Date: February 28-29, 2020

Time: 9:00 am - 5:00 pm

Location:

Red Lion Inn & Suites

Olympia, Governor Hotel

Interested in
serving on the
commission?

There are 1, 2 and
3-year terms, and you
can apply [here](#).

Last year the Legislature established the LGBTQ Commission and Gov. Jay Inslee signed it into law in April. After a competitive, transparent application process J. Manny Santiago was named commission director in August.

Director Santiago was the executive director of Rainbow Center in Tacoma and has served as pastor at University Baptist Church in Seattle and Church of St. Paul and St. Andrew in New York City. He has masters degrees in divinity and public administration and is currently pursuing a doctoral degree in education.

In RCW 43.114.005 the Legislature declares that “the state is responsible for improving its interface with the LGBTQ community, identifying the needs of its members, and ensuring that there is an effective means of advocating for LGBTQ equity in all aspects of state government.” The new commission is charged with carrying out that responsibility.

In December Gov. Inslee named the first 15 Commissioners. Congratulations!

Position Number	Member Name	Term Begin	Term End	Position Requirements
1	Matthew Landers	12/24/2019	6/30/2020	General Public
2	Marsha Botzer	12/23/2019	6/30/2020	General Public
3	Isyss Honnen	12/23/2019	6/30/2020	General Public
4	Karen Goldsen	12/23/2019	6/30/2020	General Public
5	Everett Maroon	12/23/2019	6/30/2020	General Public
6	Lars Erickson	1/17/2020	6/30/2021	General Public
7	Maeve Griffith	12/23/2019	6/30/2021	General Public
8	Beto Yarce	12/23/2019	6/30/2021	General Public
9	Steven Sawyer	12/23/2019	6/30/2021	General Public
10	Jeffrey Robinson	12/23/2019	6/30/2021	General Public
11	Tobi Hill-Meyer	12/23/2019	6/30/2022	General Public
12	Jac Archer	1/17/2020	6/30/2022	General Public
13	Michelle Kelly-Barroga	12/23/2019	6/30/2022	General Public
14	Alvaro Figueroa	12/23/2019	6/30/2022	General Public
15	Josette Ross	12/23/2019	6/30/2022	General Public

RESOURCES FOR RAIN



WASHINGTON
IMMIGRANT NETWORK

Mentorship Program



WIN is a Washington Business Resource Group whose mission is to expand opportunities for immigrants who are current and future employees within Washington state government.

WIN's Mentorship Program was established to retain and support immigrant state employees in an inclusive environment that helps them thrive and advance their careers, as well as recruit new employees from the immigrant community at large. The program's overall goal is to facilitate a more culturally and ethnically diverse state workforce which, in turn, will allow us to serve our customers better.

If you are interested in getting involved as a mentor or mentee, visit WIN's mentorship program at washingtonimmigrantnetwork.org/mentoring or contact WIN at WashintgonImmigrantNet-work@gmail.com

Latino Leadership Network

Mission: Through the power of connection –Invest, Inspire & Serve



Dip into the world of boards & commissions

Boards and Commissions are designed to give people a voice in their government and allow them to influence decisions that shape the quality of life for the residents of Washington state. So, why can't that be you? The Latino Leadership Network is an advocate for bringing greater diversity to the state's boards and commissions. We recently hosted a webinar to help demystify the process. Today we are sharing a [handy guide](#) that explains the benefits and the steps you would take to get involved.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

Meetings are open to all current state employees and are held each month



Thursday
FEB20

Dept of Labor and Industries



Thursday
MAR19

Dept of Labor and Industries



Thursday
APR16

Dept of Labor and Industries

First time attending RAIN?

Consider coming a bit early to chat with the co-chairs about ways to get involved and what our committees are working on!

If you have any questions or feedback, please feel welcome to reach out to Co-Chairs [Elizabeth Fontanilla](#) and [Ariel Kay](#).

Future newsletter ideas?

**Is your agency implementing a diversity related initiative?
Are you aware of a community event others should know about?**

If you have ideas for future newsletter features or would like to contribute content, please send your articles (photos are great too - if you have permission!) to RAIN Communications Co-Chair [Tracey Carlos](#), no later than April 20, 2020.