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COMMISSION ON HISPANIC AFFAIRS
COMISIÓN DE ASUNTOS HISPANOS

CHA Community Meeting, Olympia

March 15th, 2013

6:30 – 9:00pm

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The meeting was called to order at 6:40pm.

Roll Call

Commissioners Present: Lillian Ortiz-Self, Anita Ahumada, Sharonne Navas, Cynthia DeVictoria, Ty Cordova, Manuel Reta, Rosalba Pitkin, Gloria Ochoa

Staff Present: Uriel Iniguez, Marena Lear. Interns: Felix Fernandez and Jose Oliva.

Introductions and Acknowledgements

Commissioners introduced themselves. The Chair thanked the public for attending and the panelists for participating. Commissioner Ahumada introduced the panelists:

- John Bash, Deputy Superintendent of North Thurston Public Schools
- Sandra Romero, Thurston County Commissioner
- Idolina Reta, Human Rights Commission
- Terry Jeffreys, Mason County Commissioner
- Dick Cvitanich, Superintendent of Olympia School District
- Sharon Gilbert, DSHS Children's Services

Agenda Review

Chair Ortiz-Self outlined the agenda for the meeting, which began with CHA official business, then a presentation on the Commission and the Latino community in the Olympia area, followed by a 5 minute presentation from each of the panelists. This was followed by public comment, wherein community members are asked to direct their comments to the Commission, which then poses the questions to the panel.

Chair Ortiz-Self introduced the staff and interns.

CHA Official business

- Commissioner Pitkin made a motion to approve the minutes, Commissioner Reta seconded the motion.



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- Commissioner DeVictoria made a motion to nominate Commissioner Navas as Vice Chair. Motion was seconded by Commissioner Pitkin. All commissioners in favor, motion passed. Commissioner Navas was recognized as the new Vice Chair of the Commission.

CHA Presentation

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Director Iniguez and Commissioner Ahumada presented information on the issues of housing, public safety, and education to be addressed during the meeting, with information on the Latino demographics in the local area.

Chair introduced Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos

Representative Santos

This presentation does not do justice to the work, commitment, and passion of all these commissioners. They were instrumental in many of those programs. I've been privileged to be a partner with all of you on that journey. This is a journey we take up together because of our young people, here in this room and at home in our communities. I will mention quickly that we had an extraordinary day in the State of Washington 2 days ago when the House passed the state Dream Act, acknowledging that all children are members of this community whom we invest in, now and in the future. I want to say thank you to this commission and the community for supporting the state Dream Act. We have another important step to take to get it out of the Senate.

The other bill that I want to mention is the bill based on the recommendations of the Educational Opportunity Gap Oversight and Accountability Committee. This commission and this community was critical to the formation of that committee, and it has developed some strong recommendations that are really going to make a difference in the lives of our children, addressing some of the issues that we face in our schools around disproportionate discipline, lack of a trained educator workforce that can work with ELL students and students of diverse populations. Between 2000 and 2010, the ELL population in the State of Washington increased by 65%. We've not seen that kind of change in the demographics of the workforce who teach our children, and yet the talent is there. So we want to create a pipeline for future educators, beginning with those in high school. This is an honorable profession – what could be more important than the daily fostering of a love of learning in our young minds? We also have recommendations to build greater accountability for ELL learners so they don't get left behind while they're trying to acquire language skills. We need to work to gather relevant data about our students, to find out what their barriers are and what helps them grow and learn. In the future we will be asking more questions about your students. With your help in supplying the information, we can do a better job in helping our students.

I would like to thank the Commissioners; I can't tell you how much your work has meant to all the children of Washington State.



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Panelist Remarks

John Bash, Deputy Superintendent of North Thurston Public Schools

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We believe engaging with our community is one of the most important things we do as public servants. I want to applaud your work on behalf of students. We in public education must have a commitment to all students no matter what their needs are. Tonight I want to address the issues we were given in advance and share information about our school district and the things we're doing to meet the needs of our Latino students as well as our English Language Learners. We prepared some information and did some research on our own system.

Interpreter services:

We schedule our parent teacher conference weeks twice a year, and there is a sudden concentrated need for interpretation. While the majority of our conferences do provide interpreter services, there is a supply and demand issue. We recruit from the community, and if there are bilingual people in the audience I invite you to contact us if you're interested in joining the group of people we reach out to to provide those services. Families that plan with us and work with us well in advance of the conference typically always receive the services they need. If parents or families cannot attend a conference, then rescheduling an interpreter does become a challenge. As students register for school, we include some of the questions that Rep. Santos mentioned. We ask many of those questions already as part of our registration process, including about interpreter services, and we catalog that information. We have many staff who call parents and ask them so that we can plan in advance. One school actually begins their conference planning with students who need interpreters as their first step, and they schedule all the other conferences afterwards. Some of our schools are prioritizing students who need interpreters.

While we're proud of all that we've done, we do believe we can always get better, so we appreciate the concern. We want to continue to add to our list of qualified interpreters so that we can provide that help for every child and family.

Discipline/expulsion issue:

The data shows that it is simply not true that a higher proportion of Hispanic students are suspended or expelled in the North Thurston Public School District. The data shows that we are perhaps disproportionate towards white students, and that's something we need to take a look at as well. The good news is that our overall numbers are down because we implemented a new system called Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports. Instead of focusing on punishments, we're focusing on teaching and positive reinforcement for students when they get it right. This goes a lot farther than punitive sanctions. Karen Eitrem, Director of Diversity, is in the audience and chairs the multicultural advisory committee, which is a group designed to keep us aware of the needs of all of our students including our



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students of color, which make up almost half of our student population. We are the most diverse and largest district in Thurston County, and we take very seriously the charge that comes with serving diverse populations. Thank you for having me.

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Sandra Romero, Thurston County Commissioner

I want to thank you for this opportunity, I always learn a lot from being at these types of forums. I try to think that I want to stay in touch as an elected official; unfortunately that's not always the case. So I want to leave an open invitation that if you see something that's not right, please contact me and we'll work on it together. I understand there are a lot of challenges, and that one of them is the language barrier. I had a disturbing situation once when a woman came up to me and said "comida", and I wasn't making the connection between "food" and needing to find the food bank, but luckily I found an interpreter. In preparation for this meeting, I asked our compliance department to see what complaints we had in the file. We currently don't have any. We do have a fluent Spanish speaker in that department who has been there for 4 or 5 years, and has served on the board of the Hispanic Roundtable of Thurston County. That is a great resource. What's troubling about housing is the red tape. We can only investigate complaints when we get them in writing. Under the landlord/tenant act, you have 24 hours to fix something if it is imminent, such as no water or electricity. Nothing can go on longer than 10 days in any case. We keep things confidential, but we can't promise that the landlord won't threaten. I want to say that we're always open and willing to work. We did start a new program last year called Healthy Homes. Those visits are free – if someone has mold, we will have someone go and look at the home and determine if it's healthy or not. If not, we can refer it to the board of health compliance. Unhealthy housing is unacceptable. If you see it, we're there to help. Thank you.

Terri Jeffreys, Mason County Commissioner

When I received this invitation, it was obvious to me that I knew nothing about the issues facing our Latino community. I'm very thankful because it gave me the push to learn. I found that we have some people with their eyes and ears on the ground, who are not used to being heard, and this also provided them with the opportunity to come and talk to me. We have a phenomenal woman, Lucy Santiago, who is a strong advocate. We have issues where people have tuberculosis but they don't have the opportunity to be isolated because there is just no room.

I had started going around to communities where I was concerned about unhealthy housing conditions, and tried to research how I could help as a Commissioner. Unfortunately we currently don't have a compliance officer. We had to cut our staff by 160 people over the last 3 or 4 years, and we are just trying to make ends meet. So these are challenges that I know exist and I know it is incumbent upon me to do



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something about them as an elected official. Commissioner Ahumada, I want to know more about the cases you referred to with the sheriff's office. My discussions with Ms. Santiago opened up an opportunity for the CIELO project to do some cultural competency training with our sheriff's department, so we'll start there. There has been very fast growth in this population in the last ten years, 108% in the last 10 years nationwide. 20% percent of the babies born in our hospitals are Latino babies, and 34% of our population lives in poverty. So this is a young and growing population who also need to know that there is hope and opportunity for them to have a place in our community. Last summer we put together an informational session on the DREAM act. The hope of parents for their children is something that needs to be honored. This legislation needs to be supported, and I will support it as much as I can within my sphere of influences. I hope to encourage our education professionals to embrace that hope and not let it die. Thank you again for the opportunity to learn more about these issues, and I do want to have more personal interactions regarding this.

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Sharon Gilbert, Regional Administrator, DSHS Children's Administration

I also want to thank the Commission; I always appreciate the opportunity to talk about our work. I work in the department of Children's Administration which oversees Child Protective Services. I have heard many concerns about the removal of children, and barriers to the reunification of families. I'll explain a little bit about how the system works. Our agency responds to intakes or referrals from the community if there is suspicion that a child is being abused or neglected. Mandated reporters are individuals such as teachers, law enforcement, or medical professionals, and they are required by law to report to law enforcement or CPS when they believe that children are being abused or neglected. We probably receive about 87,000 reports a year statewide; however we don't investigate all of them because some of the reports don't meet a legal standard for the definition of abuse or neglect. When we do investigate, a social worker will go out and meet with the family to gather information. We may talk with medical providers, school districts, and get as much information as we can. What we want to do is provide services to the family, to strengthen the family so that they can care for their children. In the cases that we do investigate, a very small percentage of children are placed out of the home. Our social workers do not have authority to place children – it is only through law enforcement or a court order. Social workers can petition the court to place children in temporary custody. We make every effort to place children with family members before placing them in foster homes. We reach out to families when we are talking about placement, we have a meeting with the family and we ask to have extended family present so we can explore where children could go where they know the family. We make every effort to get them back with their parents as soon as possible. We do this by providing services to the family. Sometimes there are parents that maybe struggling with drugs and alcohol, mental health, and we provide services for that. If families feel that they're being treated unfairly, that a worker is not following policy, that needs to be reported, and there is a process for doing that. We have a constituent relations office that you can call, and there is also the Office of Family and Children Ombudsman, which is independent of our agency.



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Superintendent Dick Cvitanich, Olympia Public Schools

I'm new to the Olympia school district this year, and this has been a great opportunity for me to research how Hispanic students perform in our schools, discipline issues, and the kinds of programs we're able to offer students and families. We have a little over 9,000 students in our school district, and 9.5% of those students are of Hispanic origin, 915 students which is a change from the last few years. They are evenly spread K-12, 45 – 50 students in each grade. In certain parts of the district, the numbers are higher – Garfield elementary has close to 20%. McKenney has 13% and Hansen has 12%. I was very curious about the achievement gap, and my personal passion is that every student has the same opportunities. I would say that in the Olympia school district, our Hispanic students are clearly outperforming state averages in all academic areas, but there is still a gap. Our combined district passing grade for reading in grades 3 – 10 is 83.7%, and for Hispanic students it is 74.5%. That's still way better than the rest of the state, but it's still not good enough. Our combined passing grade for math is 73.6%, and for Hispanic students it's 63%, so there's a 10% difference. Our combined graduation rate for is 89.2%, and it's 83.3% for Hispanics. In terms of suspension disproportionality, our Hispanic students have fewer suspensions than our white students. It varies year by year, but as a general trend it is lower than the rest of the population. One thing that really stuck out in looking at these statistics is that our combined free and reduced lunch rate is 28%, but with Hispanics it's around 50%. That's a clear identifier of where we need to focus our efforts, there is a huge disparity there. In our high schools, there are programs in place to target students who have high potential, whose parents came from another country or haven't pursued university degrees, and the program gives them support and tutoring, and a push to move through to higher education. At Capitol High School we have a College Bound Club – same design. It's a program for students who want to move on but haven't had that experience. I met with those students recently, and it's very important for them to see themselves going beyond Olympia public school. We have an active Latino club in Olympia High school. When I worked in Highline district, there was a large Latino community in the Burien/White Center area. I think we were really ahead in terms of connecting with the community; we appointed a liaison with the Spanish speaking community, and I personally recruited Hispanic teachers. We started recruiting staff that represented the students in the school district. This is an effort that we are really making to have our staff match our student population. Only 1 – 2% of our staff is Hispanic, and that has to change. The limited availability of interpreters is a real challenge. We've reached out through the normal channels, and we do have a number of students from Evergreen State College, particularly at Garfield.

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Idolina Reta, Washington State Human Rights Commission

Thank you, this is a wonderful opportunity for the Human Rights Commission to get some information out to the community. I have been with the WAHRC for about 30 years. I am currently a specialist in complex investigations and I do community outreach. I believe we have a very important function given the types of complaints our agency receives. The HRC enforces the law against discrimination. We've



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been around since 1949, and our mission is to eliminate discrimination in the areas of employment, housing, and places of public accommodation (this includes schools, hotels, restaurants, and any type of business that provides services to the public). To file a complaint there are certain requirements. In the area of employment, the employer has to have at least 8 employees in order for our agency to have jurisdiction. Overall, our services are free, and we have many bilingual Spanish-English investigators. We have been much reduced because of our budget, but our work has not reduced, so it takes us longer to conduct investigations. We have offices in Spokane, Yakima, Seattle, and Olympia. All our offices have bilingual staff. When someone believes they have been discriminated against in a place of public accommodation or in employment because of national origin, race, sex, age, sexual orientation/gender identity, marital status, veterans and honorably discharged veterans, these are protected classes. Families with children are also protected in the area of housing. In the area of employment, individuals have 6 months to file a complaint. In housing, you have up to one year. If you file a complaint and then the employer retaliates, you are protected against retaliation. We have a website where you can go online to file a complaint. We also have a toll free line where we can take complaints. Once you file a complaint, a copy is sent to the employer, or to the housing provider. The agency conducts a partial investigation, which means we don't represent you like an attorney, we represent the law, so we need to gather all the information from both parties. Investigations can take anywhere from 2 – 6 months. If we find that there has been a violation, our agency will represent any damages that you were caused. If you were fired from your job and it was based on one of the protected classes, we will conciliate with that employer and try to get for you what you lost. Any kind of damages or loss that you endured as part of that discrimination, we will look for compensation.

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Public Comment

Lisa Heaton, Dept. of Labor & Industries

I had the privilege this morning to meet with our director and the commission, and this is a great opportunity to respond to some of the questions that were raised. Labor and industries administers the worker's compensation system in the state. We have 2 types of claims. 1/3 of the employers in the state are self-insured. There is an Ombudsman office that advocates for workers that you can call. My staff works very closely with them and refers a lot of complaints to them. We have a wallet card with information on how to call and file a claim by phone in the language of your preference if you are injured at your workplace. We produce this card specifically for people who are in rural areas and may not have access to internet. Also, there is a new medical provider network. As of Jan. 1st, people in the state of Washington who have filed a complaint for a workplace injury need to find a doctor through this medical provider network. For the first visit you may find your own doctor, but every visit after that needs to be to a doctor that is part of this network. If there are issues of not being able to find a doctor who speaks



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Spanish, I'd like to know about it. This is a new process for our department, and we have staff you can call at 1-800-547-8267. We have 9 people that answer the phone in Spanish 40 hours a week and they help people find providers. We can help you find providers that speak your language.

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Sarah Pete

I am a librarian at the Olympia Timberland library, and I just wanted to let you know about some of the services we have at the library. We have two databases that can help Spanish speakers learn and improve their English, similar to Rosetta Stone, one for children and one for adults. We also partner with Sound literacy to have tutors in the library twice a week. We also have a database called Learning Express, where you can practice citizenship tests, GED tests in English or Spanish. We provide an hour of free internet access every day. We have computer classes for all levels. We have a new database called Ed To Go – you can sign up for self-paced, 6 week courses, taught by expert instructors for dozens of classes. We also have cultural programming for adults and youth.

Miguel Perez-Gibson

Good evening. I do a lot of work with the legislature and I just wanted to share a couple of things. One is a phone number: 1-800-562-6000 - that is the hotline number for your legislators. There are 3 bills that everyone should support. You can call and ask your senators to support these bills: Senator Brown from the 20th district and Senator Becker from the 2nd district to support 1680 (Educational Opportunity Gap), 1817 (DREAM Act) – this allows any youth who completes high school to apply for the state need grant regardless of their citizenship status. Bill 1413 (Voter Rights Act) addresses your local community government elections. Because of at-large elections we don't see all people being represented in city government, local government. This bill looks at issues around polarized voting, and where at-large district voting prevents certain communities from being represented.

Sydney Serrano, US Department of Labor

I am with the US Department of Employee Benefits Security Administration. We are a federal agency and our main mission is to protect the integrity and security of the retirement, health, and other workplace related benefits of America's workers and families. We enforce the law through regulation, and our education and outreach program. We often go out into the community to do outreach activities. We educate the community on what their rights are in respect to their retirement plans and pension plans. We also have benefits advisors on staff. If you have any complaints regarding health insurance, pension benefits, etc. you can file a complaint with us electronically or with our toll free number 866.444.3272. We have 2 or 3 Spanish speaking benefits advisors, and we also have a translation service.

Stephanie, CIEO Project



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CIELO is a local Latino community center. CIELO offers a variety of literacy programs, including English language instruction, and GED classes in Spanish. We have a computer literacy class, skill building classes such as a sewing group. We also offer culturally competent advocacy and counseling around issues of immigration, sexual assault, and other things. We also have a food bank twice a month.

As an advocate that's been working at Shelton high school since September, I would also like to comment about the lack of interpretation services for parent-teacher conferences. There is a sink-or-swim method being used to arguably systematically disempower the students in the classroom which is really where the problem lies, because by the time you get together with the parents and the teachers, the problems have already developed. More support is needed in the classrooms, and there needs to be a more culturally competent curriculum and pedagogy. These youth are receiving so many negative messages daily in the schools and in the community, and instead of empowering them, resulting in generations of bilingual, bicultural, multi-skilled adults, we're doing the opposite. I encourage you to support these youth from the ground level up, and utilize their parents as a support system.

Rosario Portaro

I would like to know more about the DREAM act that passed 2 days ago.

Antonio Sotelo

I have a son who was in CPS for two years. DSHS in Shelton did me great harm. There was a social worker who based on just lies extended the case to return my son, they threw me into immigration, and there were many false accusations made by the social worker. She accused me of being negligent, and she still works there. I would like someone to respond as to why she is still working there. I have some pictures here – while my son was with the state, he was bitten by a dog on the face, and the social worker never reported it.

Gustavo Portaro

We are working in the Hispanic ministry here in this church, and every Sunday there is free internet, and GED math and science. It is free every Sunday from 4pm to 6pm.

Break

Discussion (Commissioners & panel members)

Uriel Iniguez, Director, CHA

The DREAM Act is not a law yet, we still have a lot to do in the Senate. This bill enables all students to who qualify for the Deferred Action to qualify for college in-state tuition. We do have a shortage in the



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state need grant. We're fighting to get more money for the state need grant, and this bill would let many more students be eligible.

Lillian Ortiz-Self, Chair

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Directed to John Bash and Dick Cvitanich

I appreciate your statistics on suspensions and expulsions. The Achievement Gap Committee has identified this as a major factor in the success of our children. PBIS and Avid are two of the programs that have proven to be very successful, so thank you for utilizing those programs. One of the bills introduced this session was around utilization of certified translators for families in the area of education. This would allow for more confidentiality for parents, decrease misinterpretation of materials, and especially around high end education plans like individual plans for special education children. Can you speak to this bill? Do you see this as a benefit or a negative?

John Bash

For a technical situation, like individualized special education, it may be necessary to look at the technical skills and qualifications of the individual. In some of those situations it may not be someone who is certified, but someone who has experience with the school setting. Sometimes we pull a bilingual teacher to perform as an interpreter. I would have two concerns about that legislation: one, would it eliminate the flexibility schools currently have to decide who is best suited, and two, would increasing the standard have a cost attached to it. If you're looking for a more highly trained person, you're going to have a hard time finding what is already in short supply, but you're going to have to pay more. Our supreme court found that our state is not fully funding education, so while we can get behind these ideas in legislation, we believe the state is already overdue in paying for what they already require. We continue to endure a long list of expectations that come with no money to implement them. I encourage the community to call the 1-800 number that was given earlier and tell their legislators to fully fund education as the courts have ordered them to do.

Lillian Ortiz-Self, Chair

The bill would leave the level of interpretation services needed to the parents to decide. As part of the McCleary decision it would provide more money.

Dick Cvitanich

I would just add that in the day to day, there are incidents which don't require certification. There are people that can provide translator services for everyday things that occur. We need to be mindful of who is available and when they're available. Setting this bar can eliminate some people who are very capable



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of helping kids and families. I do agree with John about IEPs, and parents also have an opportunity to waive some of those pieces. Why wouldn't you ask a neighbor who's fluent in the language to sit with you and talk with a teacher if they're available? We can certify many people, but we'll just keep reducing the pool. We need the help.

Commissioner Cordova

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Directed to Sharon Gilbert

You mentioned that DSHS does not investigate all complaints because some incidents do not meet the legal standards for abuse. Can you clarify what constitutes legal standards for abuse? Statistics show that individuals whose primary language is not English are more comfortable and can more precisely report injustices or race complaints in their own language. Do you have bilingual staff who can speak to individuals who call with complaints? What are the appropriate procedures to file a grievance?

Sharon Gilbert

We would probably investigate maybe 50% of those calls. Let me give you an example of the kind of call that we might not investigate: someone calls us and says that the parents are using drugs and alcohol and using around the kids. That, in and of itself, would not constitute a reason for us to investigate, because we need to relate whatever is being reported to abuse or neglect of the child. If we were told however that the parents were using drugs and alcohol and the kids weren't being supervised while playing by a busy street, that would be different. It depends on the information we get from the caller. We have very clear laws that outline what is abuse and neglect. For instance, physical abuse – it's not against the law for parents to spank their children. But if there is discipline to the point where they are leaving more than just temporary marks, in other words bruising, that is against the law. We try to also talk to others that have additional information to see whether or not it is the right decision to investigate. When the allegation is something that is also a crime, we involve law enforcement. In terms of language abilities, we do have bilingual staff, not in all our offices, but we also have language lines, and we contract out for document translation. Many of our documents are in other languages. Procedure for filing a grievance: we encourage people to talk to their social workers and their local office, and if things can't be resolved, we have the office of constituent relations, which is one of my offices. There is also the Family and Children Ombudsman, which is an agency that works directly for the Governor's Office and it's independent of our agency. So there are several avenues that people can take to file a complaint. We take it very seriously if we hear that someone isn't being truthful and we will look into it.

Commissioner Reta

Directed to Sharon Gilbert



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If an undocumented parent gets stopped by immigration and they have children, do you have a procedure in which the child is relocated or do you get ahold of immigration?

Sharon Gilbert

We would handle it like any other case; whether a person is documented or not does not make a difference. We have licensed foster parents who may not be documented, so that is not an issue for us.

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Commissioner Reta

If the parent is deported and the child is left behind, what is the procedure?

Sharon Gilbert

If they're deported to another country, we would work with the consulate on that, and try to get the children with local family members.

Commissioner Reta

Directed to Idolina Reta.

You said that skin color is a protected class. My question is: can an individual file a claim through you and what is your procedure in order to get an answer from the government which is ICE or Border Patrol?

Idolina Reta

Our agency does not have jurisdiction over federal issues. The issue of deportation is a federal government issue. Discrimination based on color is in employment, housing, or places of public accommodation.

Commissioner Reta

Directed to John Bash and Dick Cvitanich

Is there a lack of Hispanic/bilingual teachers in your districts?

Dick Cvitanich

In the Olympia school district, there are very few Latino teachers. Early I addressed that we are going to step up recruiting efforts because we think we need to work in that area; we need to have students seeing adults that are role models. We do have some bilingual teachers, but a very small number.

John Bash



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We have increased the numbers, but in all classifications, like Olympia we include in every job posting a preferred qualification that someone is bilingual. When all things are equal and I have two qualified candidates and one is bilingual and one is not, I will choose the bilingual person and/or person of color. We want our staff to mirror our student population, and we've made significant progress in North Thurston. This is my 3rd year, and since I joined we have hired two principals of color, one assistant principal is Latino and bilingual. Timberline high school has at least 5 bilingual staff, one of them is a counselor, and the rest are teachers. I think we need to do much more in this regard if you simply look at student and staff percentages there is still a disparity in our system.

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Commissioner Pitkin

Directed to John Bash and Dick Cvitanich.

What is going to be your specific strategy for diversity recruitment?

Dick Cvitanich

We are rewriting our district's strategic plan, and there is a specific statement in regard to the diversity of our teaching staff. That is new to the district, and that will form the basis for some of our goals. We are taking different steps to what we've done in previous years. We've been a part of a personnel co-op. Our staff did not go out and recruit teachers, they waited for teachers to apply. Already this year we've sent staff to three different places to recruit the best possible teachers and that includes Spanish speaking candidates. We are being very aggressive, and it's a change to what we've previously done.

John Bash

Some of our recruitment activities have included going to several of the local universities. What we try to market and have found with our diversity candidates is that the diversity of our student population is appealing and attractive. With the materials that we bring and how we describe our school district, we've found that the candidates we've successfully recruited and retained have told us that that was the deciding factor for them, because they would be living and raising their families in this community as well. It's not just about employment; it's about the type of community we live in. Those are some marketing strategies we're using.

Dick Cvitanich

I'd like to add that when I did some recruiting for Highline, I recruited in Santa Fe and San Diego for Spanish speaking teachers. Mr. Bash is right on target – they wanted to know what the community was like, and were there opportunities for them to maintain their heritage in the community. That's a very big question when you recruit candidates to bring to our area, even though it's changing.



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Lillian Ortiz-Self, Chair

Directed to County Commissioners

We know that equitable access is really important. When things go wrong, people many times do not understand how to file grievances or make their concerns known. What is your marketing strategy for reaching out to the Latino community to let them know how to access you with their concerns?

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Commissioner Terri Jeffreys

I'm brand new, and this is an issue that I'm just now learning about. We do have Hispanic Roundtable, it meets monthly in our community, and I've committed myself to attend those meetings, to make sure that the people who have their ears to the ground know who I am and that I am available. That will help me understand what type of marketing strategy to develop, and at the very least getting to know the people that are close to the people that may need services and better access.

Commissioner Sandra Romero

As an elected official my duty is to stay connected to the community so that I know what services are available. We just hired a new person in Thurston County who is the director of our Office of Assigned Counsel, and he is Hispanic. We're making progress in diversifying county government. We have a person in our permitting office who is fluent in Spanish, and served on the Hispanic Roundtable in our county, and he started the annual Latino youth summit. In our health department we are always working towards having more bilingual staff. Currently we have only have two. We don't have an office for complaints.

Commissioner Ochoa

Directed to John Bash and Dick Cvitanich.

You've both addressed that there is an achievement gap in your schools. What do you provide for students coming in that are monolingual? Is it a total immersion, or a dual language program? What types of services are available for students and their families?

Dick Cvitanich

We offer a sheltered instruction in our buildings right now. Because the numbers are so small, we can't assign a full time teacher to teach a more traditional ELL model, because it would take kids a long ways outside of their neighborhoods. We offer sheltered instruction at each elementary school.

John Bash



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We serve just over 600 students who qualify for our language programs. We also have a sheltered program, but we do concentrate the programs to provide more services for a longer time each day. When a new student enrolls who is monolingual, one of the first things we do is give them survey so we can find out what the language is and if they might be eligible for that services. Once we know what their language level is then we have trained ESL staff to determine which site and program would best serve them. Some families elect not to, and instead remain at their neighborhood school, which is a choice we offer. As much as we can we work with general education staff around sheltered instruction strategies to serve those students in the regular classroom. The longest they would travel is about 15 minutes one way to get services, and this is usually for beginning and intermediate level students. Any shuttling happens before or after school. Typically 7 – 12th graders go to a school full time that has ESL support.

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Commissioner Ahumada

Directed to John Bash and Dick Cvitanich.

What kind of parent engagement efforts are you making for Latino parents, as far as making them aware of their rights?

Dick Cvitanich

I don't think we're doing a whole lot. The populations vary school to school, and most Latino students are in Title 1 schools, where there are federal dollars to support outreach. But typically it's what we do for all students who are not achieving the way they should, not just Latinos. We hold math nights, reading nights, parent nights, where kids come together with families gathered around an instructional topic or even a fun activity, but it would be the same type of activity for all students.

John Bash

In addition to the multicultural advisory group, which does include some parents, we use the community cafe model. The thing we have found most effective in engaging parents is this model. At a school based level. We've done this at two of our elementary schools with very large ELL populations, and we're expanding it to a middle school. We get support from Familias Latinas. We run the cafe in Spanish, we have the same interpretation equipment available. The parents take leadership and select the topics they want to focus on, such as our hopes and dreams for our children and reducing bullying and harassment, and schools support parents in creating this involvement and growing this community. This is the deepest and richest activity. We are trying to grow it, by training teams of staff members and parents, and we provide funding and guidance.

Lillian Ortiz-Self, Chair

Thank you all for spending your Friday night with us. Thanks to our community members for attending. Some important themes to follow up on from this meeting: one of the things we hear constantly is that



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need for equitable access – our parents need to know how to access systems, and there are numerous barriers that get in the way, such as lack of translators, interpreters, people that look like them. Interpreters that are familiar with the system and understand the grievance process themselves; advocates and supporters – all these things are often missing. I would encourage all our panelists to look at their systems in a really honest way, and by that I mean encourage parents to give feedback. For the gentleman whose child was hurt, I want to say I'm so sorry; no child should ever have to go through that. I would ask that Ms. Gilbert follow up with him and Commissioner Ahumada on the grievance process. Interpreter services are a huge issue. Often we see community members, students, or other parents translating for parents and students and they are uncomfortable having that information shared. Imagine if you're in crisis and you have to share your information with multiple people. Oftentimes this information is also not translated correctly. I would encourage all of our systems to look at some guidelines for how to use interpreters, and may it never be children or other students. Give parents a voice to speak to what they are comfortable with utilizing. Parents have a voice, CHA values it, and we want to hear from you. Our agencies need to utilize and hear from you. I encourage agencies to utilize parent advisory groups in every way that they can, they are our experts on their children, and they are experts on whether the system does or does not work. It can't be a group of professionals with only one or two parents in there, because they will never speak up. Parents have to feel empowered to make the suggestions they feel are necessary without repercussions. We see that model happening in many places across the state, and we see districts change, we see agencies changes, we see parents being empowered, as we collaborate in a partnership that ultimately benefits our children. With that I want to thank all of you. Know that the Commission on Hispanic Affairs cares about what you're going through and wants to hear from you, and wants to be a partner with every one of our agencies. This meeting is now adjourned.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:07pm.