

# WASHINGTON STEM 2021 POLICY PRIORITY: STATEWIDE OFFICE OF EQUITY



Washington STEM is a catalyst for opportunity, possibility, and prosperity in STEM. We work in partnership with eleven regional networks to provide equitable access to STEM education and pathways to careers in the in-demand fields of science, technology, engineering, and math for all Washington students, especially those furthest from opportunity

## **OFFICE OF EQUITY:**

The Washington State Office of Equity established on July 1, 2020, within the Office of the Governor. The Equity Office is required to facilitate state policy and systems change to promote equitable policies, practices, and outcomes.

## **OFFICE OF EQUITY IN THE GOVERNOR'S BUDGET:**

Washington STEM supports the \$2.5 million in funding towards the Office of Equity that is included as a priority in Governor Inslee's [2021-23 budget](#).

The state Equity Office, created by the Legislature in 2020, will

- develop the state's five-year equity plan,
- help the state develop language access requirements, remove barriers to accessing state services and decrease inequities across state government,
- help agencies develop and implement their own diversity, equity and inclusion plans,
- promote systemic and cultural changes,
- introduce best practices and change management to agencies, and
- design an online performance dashboard that measures agencies' progress toward diversity goals.

**WHY SUPPORT?** The Office of Equity is one mechanism to hold agencies accountable to ensure equity is at the forefront of policy and rulemaking decisions that have impact on students across the state. We support funding and tasking the new Equity Office. We also believe that Statewide Office of Equity will increase accountability from agencies by requiring them to develop & report on specific equity goals. We urge data disaggregation by race for reporting & measurement of progress. Transparent data and measurement ensures efficient use of state funds.

## **OFFICE OF EQUITY COMMUNITY ADVISORY BOARD:**

We support [Senate Bill 5105](#). The proposed legislation creates the Community Advisory Board (Board) to advise the Office on its priorities and timelines, and:

- Requires the Office report on barriers for community participation on boards and commissions in its October 31, 2022 report.
- Provides the Office with certain rulemaking authority
- Requires state agencies to: designate a diversity, equity, and inclusion liaison; apply an equity lens to agency decision-making; develop plans for diversity, equity, and inclusion and for language access; provide data and information to the Office; and collaborate with the Office to develop performance measures.
- Requires an evaluation of the implementation of the Office and report to the Governor and Legislature by October 31, 2025.

## ABOUT US

At Washington STEM, our work revolves around three main areas:

- **Strategically Convene and Partner** with 11 Regional STEM Networks, alongside business, education, and community leaders to identify and scale effective local solutions.
- **Provide direct support** through open-source access to data and measurement tools and targeted financial investments.
- **Advocate for change** through educating decision makers, storytelling, and collaboration in order to create the foundation for lasting, equitable change in our state.

If you have any questions about our work, please contact Washington STEM Policy Director, Dr. Bish Paul at [bish@washingtonstem.org](mailto:bish@washingtonstem.org).

**1,000,000 students across the state are supported through STEM Network activities and programs.**

