



## Washington State Joint Legislative Task Force on Jail Standards

### MEETING MINUTES

March 23, 2023 3:00 – 5:00 p.m.

<b>1.</b>	<b>Welcome</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Co-chair Ethan Frenchman welcomed Task Force members to the eighth meeting of the Joint Legislative Task Force on Jail Standards.</li><li>• Ethan Frenchman reviewed the agenda. The task force adopted the agenda for the March 23 meeting.</li><li>• Ethan Frenchman reviewed the January and February meeting’s minutes. The task force approved minutes from both meetings.</li><li>• Establishment of quorum. See list below.</li></ul>
<b>2</b>	<b>Facilitated Panel Discussion:</b> <p>Task force co-chair Hailey Ockinga facilitated a conversation with four individuals whom have experienced incarceration in Washington State on the topics of the use of segregation and use of force in jails. The panelists were:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anthony Blankenship, Civil Survival</li><li>• Chanel Rhymes, Task Force Member &amp; Northwest Community Bail Fund</li><li>• Christopher Blackwell, Look2Justice</li><li>• Jordan Landry, Task Force Member</li></ul> <p>The panelists introduced themselves and stated their experience with incarceration in Washington State.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Chanel Rhymes explained that she has experienced incarceration at the Pierce County Jail on three occasions and was placed into segregation while in custody.</li><li>• Christopher Blackwell noted that he was incarcerated for the first time at the age of twelve, and has been in prison now for 20 years. Christopher explained that throughout his incarceration, he has experienced segregation more times than he is able to count.</li><li>• Anthony Blackwell explained he is previously incarcerated and experienced solitary confinement when he was placed onto suicide watch at the Pierce County Jail. Anthony added that he currently is part of a coalition that is seeking to end long-term solitary confinement.</li><li>• Jordan Landry stated that he spent 42 months in the King County Correctional Facility before being released in September 2022. Jordan noted that he was placed into administrative segregation at one point for 19 months, and then in medical segregation for 14 months consecutively.</li></ul>

Hailey Ockinga asked the panelists if they could expand upon these experiences so that the task force could understand more about the impacts of the use of segregation and use of force in jails.

- Jordan Landry offered that he would like the task force to understand the harm and the effects of when people are housed in such a way. Jordan noted that when people are shackled every time they leave their cell, it has a lasting effect, and will stay with them upon release. Jordan stated that it impacts how you interact with people going forward and how you view the system. He believes it leads to recidivism.
- Chanel Rhymes stated she would like the task force to understand that these experiences are dehumanizing and that the group cannot ignore the ties to slavery when people are being shackled. Chanel offered that the conditions impacts people's mental health and inflict trauma. She also noted, that from her experiences, use of force was not needed – and rather, staff escalated the situations or, in some cases, were overzealous when using force. Chanel reiterated that these conditions impact recidivism.
- Anthony Blankenship agreed with Chanel, and stated that the dehumanization that occurs is central. Anthony added that calling it segregation does not encapsulate what is happening to people. He referred to segregation as a tool that is meant to—and does—break people. Anthony described segregation – where you are placed into a small windowless room, receive cold food, lights on 24 hours a day, and have no awareness of days or time. In his experience, these conditions led to him becoming suicidal. Anthony noted that whether its jails or prisons, these events happen every day in Washington. He stated that experiencing solitary is something he will carry the rest of his life, and has been lucky to find healing where others have not.

Hailey Ockinga encouraged the panelists to provide suggestions to the task force on what changes they believe could lead to fewer people being placed in segregation.

- Jordan Landry offered a few suggestions including having specialized housing units and better classification systems to ensure that people who are vulnerable are protected. He also offered the idea of divesting from jails by investing in them with external oversight. Jordan explained that funding for cameras could cut down on incidents of violence and abuse of power. He added that external oversight and establishing guardrails for those in segregation are needed.
- Chanel Rhymes stated that having more gender-informed care would help, and the lack of it is what led to her being put into segregation. Chanel offered that having a punitive mindset will show up in how people are treated, and reminded the group that many people in jail are pretrial and have not been convicted. She concluded that better classification is needed, and that people who are in segregation cannot be treated the same.
- Christopher Blackwell highlighted that some jails are dealing with hundreds of people coming through daily, and that staff often get burnt out, which can lead to aggression. He noted that jails are filled with people dealing with traumatic experiences, and having staff who are trained and able to act in a professional

matter is critical. Connectivity to the community is also important, and Christopher noted that from his experiences, jail calls are nearly five times as much as they are in prison. Christopher concluded if people are treated fairly, assessed, and helped with their needs, this would reduce violence.

- Anthony Blankenship noted that people entering a jail in active crisis, and we should be questioning if that person needs to be in jail, and whether jail is an appropriate place for them. He offered that jail is not an appropriate place for people experiencing withdrawals, and questioned if we are investing in other treatment facilities. Anthony stated he has seen a lack of programming in jails, and noted that the idleness and lack of educational opportunities or ways to engage one's mind adds to the struggles of incarceration. He also noted that many non-profits struggle getting access to people in jails to provide these services. Anthony concluded that programming, decarceration efforts, and helping protect those who are detained (e.g., people with certain charges, people with disabilities) is paramount.
- Chanel Rhymes also wanted to remind the group that the people who are in jail experiencing these situations are there because they do not have the money to afford bail. She offered that when a judge sets bail they have deemed the person okay in the community, if they are able pay. She reiterated that bail is simply a tool to ensure someone shows up at court, and should not result in punishment.

Hailey Ockinga asked the panelists to share their thoughts on how to make information about the use of segregation and use of force in jail public.

- Anthony Blankenship stated that government transparency is of the utmost importance and that often the public does not know what happens beyond the walls in correctional facilities. Anthony noted that all information should be available, including videos of use of force, so long as it does not implicate security. He added it is critical to start collecting this data, be better recorders of the information, and work towards changing the culture of corrections to be more transparent.
- Christopher Blackwell added that harm can happen behind walls, not just in jails and prisons, but it occurs in our own homes as well. He noted that having information on these topics is important to know what is and not working. Spending weeks or months in isolation does not help anyone, and making this information public can help raise awareness, which can lead to more accountability. Christopher concluded that jails should be able to operate where there is no need to hide information.
- Jordan Landry acknowledged that transparency goes a long way in being able to achieve a common good. He also emphasized that privacy matters, and not everything about these situations needs to be public. Jordan noted the importance of having an external oversight body that can review uses of force and cases of disciplinary segregation. Jordan reiterated to the group the impacts of being in isolation when you are also blind – and that it was not until an external body came in, that he was provided with an audio book, which became his lifeline for the next five months of segregation. Jordan concluded that oversight should exist so that situations such as those do not happen.

- Anthony Blankenship reiterated that transparency as well as accountability are important. He offered that transparency is acknowledging a mistake was made and owning up when it occurs. Anthony offered that accountability would include that level of transparency, work towards a system that does not perpetuate harm, and provide opportunities for when jails come forward with a mistake for the system to find ways to become whole again.
- Chanel Rhymes also acknowledged that transparency is important, as well as reiterated her belief that people do not need to be in jail. She noted the best safety tool is to keep people out of jail, and put them in areas where they can receive service and have their needs met. Chanel stated that a lot of harm comes from within the facility and can cause recidivism.

Hailey Ockinga asked the panelists on the types of oversight or reviews that would make sense when a use of force event occurs or segregation happens.

- Christopher offered that none of it necessarily makes sense, because in his opinion use of force should only occur when someone is attacking another individual. He offered that segregation does not make sense – most people just need some space and time to calm down. Christopher reiterated to the group how traumatizing going into segregation can be, and that we need more ways to help diffuse situations. He concluded again, there is no reason for these situations and pointed to the number of stories in the news that talk about people being beaten to death while incarcerated.
- Anthony Blankenship noted that there should be better physical and mental health assessments as well as improved mechanisms for treating and providing services to people who are flagged on assessments. He added that all of this should be documented, reported, and accessible to the public. Anthony offered that jails should be doing comprehensive reports on those housed there, and that we need to be better on collecting this information regardless of the costs. He concluded that this task force has the ability to push for the collection of information statewide.
- Jordan Landry reiterated his previous idea of divesting in jails through some investment. He noted that personally does not feel great to advocate for giving these systems money, but acknowledged that if people want programming and more services in jails, those require funds. Jordan explained that he has witnessed times where use of force was needed, had an officer not stepped in and intervened in a situation, he did not know what would have happened to the person who was being hurt. However, he emphasized if the group wants to overhaul these operations, again it will require money. Jordan noted that this funding should be required to go directly to towards those who are most vulnerable and to heal those who are hurt, in that way it is not handing a blank check, and working towards divesting from the system.
- Chanel Rhymes offered that she believes oversight should be external and requires data. She reiterated that there needs to be an outside source, and pointed to the fact that individuals who are in the Washington State Department of Corrections have the Ombuds Office, but there is currently nothing in place for people in jails.

To conclude the panel, Hailey Ockinga asked the panelists to share what they are hoping will come from the task force's recommendations.

- Chanel Rhymes stated there is a need for an outside source to regulate and monitor jails. She emphasized the importance of the public knowing what goes on inside the walls of the jail, as the people in there will not stay forever. Chanel concluded that the current system is harming more than the people currently involved, but the future as well. She pointed to the number of individuals who are parents, and how the cycle of incarceration can be passed along. Chanel concluded she wants to see a better world for her children, but we cannot do that, if we continue to harm adults.
- Jordan Landry offered that he hopes the group will enact guardrails that promote decency and safety for all, not just those who are perceived innocent and awaiting trial, not just the model inmates, but also for those in segregation too.
- Anthony Blankenship stated he would like to see a secure and safe way for people in jails to report harm. He offered that when people put a "kite" out, it will likely be going to a colleague of the person they would like to report. Anthony offered there should be an outside agency that performs oversight. He also reiterated the need for decarceration, and that when people are detained, ensure they are provided the resources they need. Anthony offered that jails should work with other organizations, nonprofits and government agencies to provide comprehensive services. Anthony concluded he would like both oversight and opportunities for decarceration.
- Christopher Blackwell offered he hope this group proves him wrong. From his experiences with incarceration, he believes that the system is working exactly how it was intended by design, and that what is happening within the system is so egregious, that he has a hard time thinking it is escaping people's view. Christopher noted that he recently spent two weeks in a county jail, and it was an eye-opening experience in terms of the conditions. He relayed that during his time there, food was only provided two times per day and never included fresh fruit. Christopher noted that the commissary prices were much higher, and that people were stealing from others, which caused fights. He added that there was no mental health support provided to people, and witnessed people being handcuffed and chained to a wall to use a phone. Christopher reiterated that if this is what he just noticed in two weeks, he again does not know how judges and prosecutors are not aware of these conditions. He concluded that he hopes this group can work towards making the system function differently so that we can help the people in need.
- Chanel Rhymes added that jails were not built with women's needs in mind. She noted that trauma and sexual assault should be taken into consideration within the group's recommendations.

Hailey Ockinga opened the floor to members of the task force and public attendees to ask questions to the members of the panel. Task force member, Wendy Jones inquired if the panelists thought a good first step would be to have jails report all uses of force and

	<p>the percentages of a jail’s population in segregation. She also asked the panelists what their thoughts were on a statewide Ombuds office.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Chanel Rhymes thought both were good ideas.</li> <li>• Jordan Landry noted from his experiences, he did not know how effective an Ombuds office would be. He added that recording the data and making it transparent would go a long way towards creating change.</li> </ul> <p>Task force co-chair, Devon Schrum thanked the panelists, and said that this conversation will lead her to go and evaluate the policies for phone calls and video visitation and understand what the charges associated with those are for friends and family.</p> <p>Hailey Ockinga concluded the panel, and thanked the panelist’s for their bravery and for coming and speaking to the group.</p>
<p>3.</p>	<p><b>Reflection on the Panel: Task Force Further Discussion</b></p> <p>Ethan Frenchman opened the floor to task force members to share their takeaways from the panel. He began by offering that when he has gone into jails with Disability Rights Washington, and would meet with people in segregation, they have no way of contacting people, and if they are allowed out, it is not typically during business hours. Ethan concluded that those most in need of communicating danger often do not have access, and noted the importance of monitoring.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Jordan Landry offered that from what he has heard from the other panelists today, it is clear that something needs to be done. He added that he believes that the group can come up with something together, and is committed.</li> <li>• Anthony Blankenship shared with the group that the panel does not represent everyone who is incarcerated. He added that the task force should consider reaching out to those communities and seek input on the recommendations before submitting them to the Legislature. He also offered while an Ombuds Office is great to have, they lack the ability to enforce change.</li> <li>• Chanel Rhymes stated she really wanted to know what the task force members thoughts were on what they had heard in the panel, and noted that herself and the panelists had shared their experiences with incarceration for over an hour, and would like to see that reciprocated.</li> <li>• Sharonda Amamilo noted that after hearing from the panelists she is wanting to know more about how to break up some of the systemic issues that were brought forward. Sharonda said as a judge, she is committed to rooting out systemic issues and maladaptive circumstances. She noted she wants to partner more with her law and justice stakeholders to bring forward these issues, and that she is also committed to finding alternatives to jail.</li> <li>• Lisa Janicki stated that as a Commissioner she works in policy, and often only receives the good reports. She highlighted how this panel has made her realize that she needs to go beyond these reports, and consider the people inside as well. Lisa noted that she is worried about how consistent and mandatory overtime is influencing actions of those who are supposed to respond to the situations in the jails.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Laurel Jones thanked the panelists, and noted that what she took away is that the harm people experience in jail is not isolated to themselves. Rather, Laurel reflected on that people will carry this trauma with them, and it affects our broader communities.</li> </ul>
<b>4.</b>	<b>Public Comment</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No members of the public in attendance provided a comment.</li> </ul>
<b>5.</b>	<b>Next Steps and Closing</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Next meeting will be on Wednesday, April 19.</li> </ul>

<b>Name</b>	<b>Task Force Affiliation</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Present</b>
Vacant	House of Representatives	Washington State Legislature	NA
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Sen. Perry Dozier	Senate	Washington State Legislature	No
Sen. Rebecca Saldaña	Senate	Washington State Legislature	Yes
Chanel Rhymes	Entities involved with or interested in the operation of local jails	Northwest Community Bail Fund	Yes
Christopher Swaby	Defense attorneys	The Swaby Law Firm	No
Devon Schrum	Jail administrators	Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs	Yes
Eliana Macias	Cities	Yakima City Councilmember	No
Ethan Frenchman	State designated protection and advocacy agency	Disability Rights Washington	Yes
Hailey Ockinga	Persons with lived experience	Beyond These Walls	Yes
Judge Jeffrey Smith	District and municipal courts	Spokane County District Court	No
Jordan Landry	Persons with lived experience	Community Representative	Yes
Laurel Jones	Statewide civil legal aid organization	Columbia Legal Services	Yes
Lisa Janicki	Counties	Skagit County Commissioner	Yes
Dr. Marc Stern	Medical and mental health providers	University of Washington, School of Public Health	No
Norma Tillotson	Prosecutors	Washington Association of Prosecuting Attorneys	Yes

Draft pending approval of the task force

Judge Sharonda Amamilo	Superior courts	Thurston County Superior Court	Yes
Chief Wendy Jones	Law enforcement	Whatcom County Sheriff's Office	Yes