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Equitable Fee Structure Report Listening Session 3

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>> KELSEY CATO: All right. Good morning, everyone. We're going to wait just a moment for everyone to trickle in from the waiting room.

All right. We'll go ahead and begin. Thank you so much for joining today's listening session on Equitable Health Profession Licensing Fees. Thank you so much for taking time out of your day to participate. I am Kelsey Cato at the Office of Health professions. I use she/her pronouns, White woman wearing glasses and wearing a black cardigan today. I am here to give you information about the fee structure review. Now, I will hand it off to Eve Austin and introduce herself and you other staff are more than welcome to give their information in chat.

>> EVE AUSTIN: Thank you so much, Kelsey, thank you for your attention today and for your feedback. I am Eve Austin and Director of Office of Health Professions. Thank you, Kelsey.

>> KELSEY CATO: So you are aware, this meeting is being recorded for transparency and to ensure we accurately capture feedback. By remaining in this session, you are consent clock to be recorded. I will put a few links in chat.

One of them is for closed captioning. There you go.

>> CORI TARZWELL: Oh. I already took care of that, Kelsey.

>> KELSEY CATO: Apologize, I was going to put our webpage.

>> CORI TARZWELL: I already posted that as well. Apologize, everyone. Go to the next slide.

I should say the link Cori put in chat is one is for closed captioning and the other is copies of the slides you will see today.

[Reading Tribal Land Acknowledgement]

I am joining this webinar from Olympia on the ancestral, unceded lands of the tribes we know today as the Squaxin, Cowlitz, and Nisqually. I honor and thank their ancestors and leaders who have been stewards of these lands, waters, and skies since time immemorial and continue to do so today. I acknowledge the history of oppression experienced by native communities, and the continued institutional and systemic policies and practices that attempt to erase their histories, stories, and voices today. I recognize that this land acknowledgement is one small step toward true allyship and I commit to uplifting the voices, experiences, and histories of the Indigenous people of this land and beyond.

Next slide, please.

Before we begin, I will provide some basic instructions for how to interact with Zoom. I am sure like us, you are all probably used to Teams at this point, but you should sigh a control panel at the bottom of your screen you see this as an example. If your muss has gone inactive, about it may have minimized, just try and move your mouse.

On the control panel is a button to mute and unmute yourself. The button is currently inactive, but we will enable your microphone so you can raise your hand to speak.

The buttons on the list of participants and question and answer box, and chat box. To the right of your control panel are options for closed captions, interpretations and reactions. You will find the hand raise button on the reactions menu.

We're also providing ASL and Spanish interpretation for this meeting. ASL interpreters should be pinned to your screen. If you cannot see the ASL interpreters, please put that in the chat and we absolutely would like to know so one of our techs can enable it for you.

If you would like to switch to Spanish, go to the globe shaped icon on the screen and select Spanish to hear the translated audio.

I want to remind you to talk slowly.

Also video is turned off by default. If you would like to share your video, please, put it in the chat and we'll enable it for you.

To support interpretation services, please, speak clearly at a moderate pace, and avoid jargon -- I know we all love our jargon, but please avoid it when possible. Please also speak slowly so our ASL and Spanish interpreters can keep up.

Today, we'll start with background and the project, walk through the fee structure review, share data we're considering and then move into the listening session for your feedback.

Let's discuss some background information before we begin. The purpose of this project is to evaluate and improve equity and health profession licensing fees. This includes ensuring fees are fair and proportionate across professions, and reflect program cost and workforce realities, and do not create unintended barriers to entry or remaining in the workforce.

We're conducting a review on how the health care profession licensing fee structures. Including evaluating current application and renewal fees. Sustainability, and comparing fees across states and considering workforce and financial impacts. And the process helps evaluate licensing fees for equity and across professions.

This slide here outlines what both the project is analyzing and the overall goal. The analysis includes current licensing fees, program fund balances, number of providers, workforce wage data in Washington State and fee structures in original states. It also looks at whether fees are equitable across professions.

The goal of all of this is to ensure licensing fees support program operations are transparent and easy to understand, and do not create unnecessary barriers.

All right. Department collects fees for initial credential applications, renewals or late renewals and other administrative services. This fee revenue supports credential processing, customer service and technical assistance and regulatory and explains services and overwhelm administration.

So the data being reviewed, this slide highlights the key data considered and reviewed. Includes the current application and renewal fees. Fund balances for each profession. Number of active providers, workforce wage data in Washington State. Fee structures in original states and equity considerations across professions and workforce impact.

Let's discuss a little bit about the listening session and we're almost there. Thank you for hanging in there with me.

We're seeking feedback from licensed professionals, piers, professional associations, training programs and any other interested parties. Your input will help inform future recommendations.

Next slide please.

This outlines the scope today. Health profession and licensing fee structures and the impacts of current fees on applicants and license holders. Out of scope are individual licensing issues or complaints. Disciplinary actions or specific cases. Broader policy topics not related to licensing fees and facility licensing fees.

This slide provide example questions to help guide the discussion today. They are not exhaustive. You are absolutely encouraged to share any relevant feedback and scope.

The questions focuses on challenges created by current fee structures, and what factored should be considered when evaluating fees and any additional concerns related to licensing costs practices.

Be pleads keep in mind, be respectful of all participants and staff, and please use the raise hand feed you're if you would like to speak. Please state your name and organization if applicable. We see a raised hand, I want to double check those. Do you have a question before proceeding

>> CORI TARZWELL: Folks are not unmuted yet, but Cynthia is on our list and we'll call on you for the first portion.

>> KELSEY CATO: Thank you, Cynthia, and we appreciate your practice right now.

We ask that comments are limited to two minutes per person and that the person speak only one time. If you have additional comments, we'll have our emails in chat if you would like it email myself or Eve Austin. Please remain focused on licensing structures and relayed impacts. Staff may mute participants or remove individuals if the guidelines are not followed.

We're almost there. Now, we're going to go down the list of people who signed up to speak today and then open up for public comments for anyone else who would like to speak. Please, let me know if I call your name and you happen to be logged in under a different name.

Again, before you speak today, please introduce yourself and who you are representing. I am going to go down the list and our team will unmute you as soon as you raise your hand.

Cynthia, I saw you were here today, so there you go, raising your hand. I appreciate it. Open up your mic and please, introduce yourself and who you are representing. You have two minutes.

>> CYNTHIA: Am I unmuted? I am Dr. Flynn, licensed in the state of Washington, and I am in Richmond, Washington and I am on the Washington Board and Association of Presenters, so I represent a board, also.

I have two main points. One is that there are for example, there are many several operating birth centers in the state of Washington that are not licensed. There is a -- under the current system, there's the unintended consequence that I am not very interested in reporting these people because it will raise my licensing fee.

We are responsible for the investigations for unlicensed folks, and that does not seem fair to me. I would much prefer the legislature to have a pool that takes care of all of the unlicensed activity in the state. And not just for birth centers. So the people who are behave clock themselves and following the rules are not penalized when someone else breaks the rules. That seems very unfair to me and it is unsustainable for small professions, and only 25 birth centers in the state and for us to pay for the multiple unlicensed birth centers is prohibitive. We can't afford it.

Also, along those lines, I do employ certified professional midwives, licensed midwives in Washington State. Many people are licensed to deliver babies and attend the birth of babies. OBs and certified nurse midwives are, and if someone is practicing without any license, the licensed midwives have to pay and the rest of us do not. That doesn't seem fair, either. There are only about 200 licensed midwives in the state, and if anybody is out there catching babies, they are stuck with the investigations and not spread across everybody who delivers babies, so that seems unfair.

In general, it is really hard on people like me, who are part of, you know, two professions with small numbers. You know, the certified nurse midwives is one thing, there are lots of us and we make more money and we can afford to pay fees. But licensed midwives don't make much money and there are fewer of them and digital centers and even fewer. Smaller professions, especially tough if we have to pay for the investigations of unlicensed people.

>> KELSEY CATO: Thank you so much for the time to speak today.

For other speakers who signed up was Billy Dickinson.

>> CORI TARZWELL: Go ahead, Billy.

>> Hello, good morning, everybody. High, Cori, it is been a minute.

>> CORI TARZWELL: Good to see you.

>> Good morning, my name is Billy Dickinson with the Washington State Medical Association, and we represent over 13,000 physicians and assistants in our state all specialties and all settings.

I am talking about the fees and [] that prompted this work, we wanted to highlight how physician licensing fees compare to other states, as that is an important situation for an equitable fee structure. For Allopathic physicians, Washington State physicians pay the fifth highest license fee across states. And this is largely the result of a recent significant license renewal fee in our state. It has House of Representatives than doubled the national original and this is particularly important as clinics are competing with others in the states and increasing retaining workforce. The Washington State regulating profession to be Bourne of that profession. And that's necessary and invites the opportunities to provide funds for other purpose.

That for your comments, and I appreciate your time and attention to this issue.

>> KELSEY CATO: Thank you for sharing that, Billy.

Those are the only two people who wanted to speak, however, we're going to open up the floor other public comments. And I want you to give your name and who you are representing and again, this is not time for questions, but we want your feedback. If you would like to speak, raise your hand so he can we can unmute you.

>> CORI TARZWELL: While we're waiting for any hands to go up, I will remind folks as Kelsey mentioned we're taking written comments, also, and via email, Kelsey and Eve have their emails written on the last slide and we'll put them in the chat as well.

>> KELSEY CATO: Okay. We'll give a few more minutes just in case anyone is feeling shy. We absolutely invite you to share in addition you have. I see Leslie. You can speak.

>> LESLIE: High, this is Leslie Emerick Washington chapter. When you have \$8 million in the hole, I am very curious to hear what solutions the Department of Health has for resolving those issues and I have other clients and I am also a lobbyist for other clients that have higher fund balances and we want to be sure money doesn't get taken away from them, and if they want to lower their licensure fees. I know

it is going to be a difficult quandary. But I totally understand that we can't raise the fees because they are lower income, but I want to be sure they are considered.

For the American massage therapy Association of Washington, I think Cynthia made a good point. We have a lot of problems with unlicensed therapists in Washington State as well. And I believe it's not really fair for our licensed practitioners have to pay the cost of verifying unlicensed massage therapists in the state. That's it.

>> KELSEY CATO: Thank you so much for your time, Leslie. Okay. I see Kaylie has raised your hand. You can speak.

>> Hi, I am Kay Lee English, chiropractor. The extremely high costs here than the country. And I reached out to the Department of Health last June inquiring about it. We come from the same situation, and we have a newsletter mentioning our fees are going up because we are having to pay for investigations on chiropractors during Covid. And the national original for licensing fees for someone like me. I only work part time, work three days a week, and I have two kids and graduated in 2016, so I feel like practitioners are going through a lot of school, and in the more recent years, we are not making as much money as our predecessors.

>> KELSEY CATO: Kay Lee, you are cutting out for me, at least.

>> CORI TARZWELL: Me as well, Kay Lee, we lost your audio there. Can you still hear us, Kay Lee? I am hearing snippets of noise and you are trying to respond, but it is not audible. That was a little bit better.

>> KELSEY CATO: A little bit more.

>> I am trying to connect with a nearby WiFi.

>> CORI TARZWELL: What are it better. We lost maybe the last two sentences of what you were saying if you can repeat it for us.

>> KELSEY CATO: We're unable to hear you again.

>> Hold on. I'm also on my phone.

I am trying to find a good spot.

>> KELSEY CATO: We can hear now if that's helpful.

>> Let me find a spot where I can be still. Okay.

[Audio cutting out]

>> KELSEY CATO: Technology issues, we have all dealt with them.

>> It is the worst.

>> CORI TARZWELL: It's a little choppy still.

>> I think I will do it where I am at and go into the chat.

>> KELSEY CATO: That's good if you want to continue at this moment where you are at.

>> I am hoping I stay connected.

>> CORI TARZWELL: It sounds good.

[Laughing]

>> No. For me [] the family dynamics, and for me to pay the new licensing fee is over \$800 and had to take many out of my retirement account. And for me, I graduated in the last 10 years and I have a ton of student debt and the cost of living is super high. So the fees are a little bit much for me to the point I might quit chiropractic in the future. Sorry about the issues.

>> KELSEY CATO: We'll open it up for anyone else. Please, raise your hand if you would like to speak. We'll give it another minute or so, just because anyone is feeling shy. Sarah, I see your hand is raised. Go ahead.

>> Hi, my name is Sarah Corrigan can you hear me?

>> Yes.

>> Hi. I am is a counselor in the state of Washington, and just echoing what the other speakers mentioned. I have been licensed for a little bit over 10 years and I have seen my fees triple over that time. As a certified counselor I am not even an independent provider and require supervising. And the pay grade, our licensing fees are over \$800 a year. And back to the equitable thing. And it doesn't seem equitable that isn't even licensed to be independent.

When I spoke to my fellow certified counselor team, I was told that the reason why the licensing fees were so high because we hell accumulated debt from a prior credential, that essentially all of us who were currently credentialed were trying to pay down. I don't know what it is or understand it. And there didn't sound like there were any plans to make any changes..

It is been many years now in a row that I considered letting my license go because it just doesn't seem equitable or -- the fee just seems outrageous compared it my pay. You know. It is ironic because we're here at the time where it seems like mental health providers are really needed, but it is just ironic. Looking forward to hear you speak.

>> KELSEY CATO: Thank you, Sarah. I appreciate your time. Anyone else who would like to speak, feel free to raise your hand. This feedback is very, very helpful. Gail, I see you raised your hand. We'll unmute you in one moment.

>> Gail: I have been thinking about whether to make comments or not. Gail McGath and interested person here. I no longer have individual profession, but care about the licensing piece in general.

I think what's so interesting about the comments made, there is a theme about how high the fees re in relationship to other states and to what people are being paid.

I hope sincerely hope that as a part of looking at this, why are the fees so much high are in Washington State.

And wrecking ball fees and many are required to be Bourne by the individual professions. So I just hope, you know, the word "Equity" it is an interesting word. And I hope it is big enough to encompass really looking at the why are the fees so large in Washington State in comparison to others? And what efficiencies or changes might be made to just lower fees overall, which makes it more equitable for everybody overall. And I know in, you know, the past decade or longer, I know various health profession groups have wanted to really drill down on what is causing the fee increases, you know. From higher legal fees to different parts and pieces, so I hope you all will do a bit of a deep dive there. That's all I wanted to say, and thanks for having these meetings.

>> KELSEY CATO: Thank you so much, Gail, for speak.

And while we're waiting, please know if you have feedback and I know we mentioned it, you are welcome come to myself or Eve Austin. And our email addresses are in the chat. We'll give it one more minute to see if anybody else would like to raise their hand.

>> CORI TARZWELL: While we're waiting for that, we did share the link to our webpage earlier, but there are people who joined since then. I am putting the link in the chat again for the information we shared on the slides, and information for Kelsey Cato and Eve Austin, and all of the information is put in the chat.

>> KELSEY CATO: Thank you, Cori. Well, it appears everyone is speaking, and I will give it one last chance and we'll go ahead and start wrapping this up.

Okay. And we'll go ahead and proceed. Next slide, please.

We cannot thank you all enough for taking time out of your day to attend here. Let us know your stories and background and input and feedback. It is incredibly valuable.

Regarding next steps, DOH staff and conducting comments, and additional recommendations. Additional engagement may occur as recommendations are defined and final recommendations will be presented bit legislature. Next slide, please.

We have one more listening session after today. Our last one is held tomorrow at 5:30. Are you more than welcome for anyone to attend. You are always welcome to attend again. So anyone who is interested, please feel free to send them those links.

And as mentioned before, if you have additional questions or feedback after today, please, feel free to reach out to us using the contact information provided in the slides and in the chat. Next slide, please.

Before we go, I would like to take a moment to really thank our wonderful interpreters for all their hard work. We so appreciate your time and you are helping make our work more accounting to Washingtonians. We hope you have a great rest of your day.