



## Washington State Liquor and Cannabis Board

February 1, 2024

The Honorable Gov. Jay Inslee  
Honorable Members of the Legislature  
Washington State LGBTQ+ Commission

Dear Gov. Inslee, Legislators, and LGBTQ+ Commissioners,

We are writing you today as the Liquor and Cannabis Board (LCB) seeks to demonstrate its sincere commitment to rebuilding trust and transparency with the LGBTQ+ community.

Since LCB's participation last week with the City of Seattle Joint Enforcement Team (JET) on Capitol Hill and additional enforcement work Saturday at some historically gay venues in the greater Seattle area, the agency has become acutely aware of the fear and alarm it raised within the LGBTQ+ community. At Wednesday's Board meeting and in many private conversations, we heard strong objections to our actions. The community expressed concerns that LGBTQ+ venues are being targeted and that the LCB did not understand the troubling history of such enforcement or the value of these clubs as a safe place for people who often face discrimination, threats, and violence.

We have also received many constructive suggestions from community members. We've been emailing, talking on the phone, and getting a chance to sit with members of the LGBTQ+ community who attended our two meetings this week.

As community members urged us on Wednesday, we endeavor to "just be better."

We pledge to do just that. We are talking today about the LGBTQ+ community but our efforts are broader and reflect our commitment to all Washington communities and marginalized groups. We as LCB employees willingly acknowledge that unlearning will only lead to fundamental change if all marginalized communities are alongside our efforts. Our agency-wide Pro Equity Anti-Racism (PEAR) Team is committed to efforts that benefit our staff, Tribes, and the diverse communities with whom we engage. LCB's Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) program will also help equip agency leadership and staff with tools for similar issues that could arise, potentially impacting other groups or communities.

We also have taken several immediate steps to prevent a repeat of last weekend's events. Effective immediately, the LCB is taking the following actions:

- **Paused Lewd Conduct Enforcement.** We are immediately suspending enforcement of the lewd conduct rule (WAC 314.11.050) while the board considers possible changes to our regulations or any legislative modifications that might come this session.
- **Paused JET Participation.** The board and leadership have decided to suspend our participation with the City of Seattle's Joint Enforcement Team. The LCB Enforcement

and Education division has already communicated this to city officials.

- **Rule Violations.** LCB's Seattle enforcement team has also decided that no citations or violations related to lewd conduct from this weekend's activities will be issued. Officers have begun the process of notifying the impacted licensees.
- **Rulemaking.** Staff is preparing a proposal to open rulemaking to review, amend, or repeal the lewd conduct regulations (WAC 314-11-050). Staff will brief the board on a proposal at caucus on Feb. 6, 2024. The board will take a vote on whether to accept that recommendation at its next regularly scheduled Board meeting Feb. 14, 2024.
- **Legislative Engagement.** We will continue to work with legislators this session, particularly the LGBTQ+ caucus and our legislative committees, to try to find solutions through legislation that further our mutual efforts.
- **Agency Review.** We have already begun to review our past practices and policies based on the complaints we've heard in recent days, including the use of photographs as evidence and our complaint process. We will continue that work and share the findings as part of our commitment to build further trust with those we regulate.
- **Engaging the LGBTQ+ Community.** Agency staff at all levels will remain engaged with community leaders as we work through these immediate steps as well as our ongoing efforts at training and education.

These steps are only the beginning of what we hope is a new relationship with Washington's LGBTQ+ community. We appreciate the partnerships already established with many of you and have benefited from your suggestions and feedback. We look forward to sharing our progress in the future.

*Sincerely,*



David Postman  
Board Chair



Ollie Garrett  
Board Member



Jim Vollendroff  
Board Member



William Lukela  
Director