

Partnerships and Equitable Practices Team - Women of Color Response

Morris, Shay DPI <Meeshay.Morris@dpi.wi.gov>

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To: Underly, Jill K. DPI <Jill.Underly@dpi.wi.gov>; Johnson, John W. DPI <John.Johnson@dpi.wi.gov>; McCarthy, Thomas G. DPI <Thomas.McCarthy@dpi.wi.gov>; Holiday, Latoya M. DPI <Latoya.Holiday@dpi.wi.gov>; Jones, Benjamin R. DPI <Benjamin.Jones@dpi.wi.gov>; Kohout, Denise E. DPI <Denise.Kohout@dpi.wi.gov>; Fath, Erin K. DPI <Erin.Fath@dpi.wi.gov>; Swetz, Abigail V. DPI <Abigail.Swetz@dpi.wi.gov>

Cc: Broach, Stacy D. DPI <Stacy.Broach@dpi.wi.gov>; Cannon, William DPI <William.Cannon@dpi.wi.gov>; Gross, Loretta DPI <Loretta.Gross@dpi.wi.gov>; Ingram, Kevin N. DPI <Kevin.Ingram@dpi.wi.gov>; Lee, Alanna R. DPI <Alanna.Lee@dpi.wi.gov>; Lovings, Tacara M. DPI <Tacara.Lovings@dpi.wi.gov>; Mirilli, Ananda D. DPI <Ananda.Mirilli@dpi.wi.gov>; Stewart, Keith DPI <Keith.Stewart@dpi.wi.gov>; Thao, Mai Choua DPI <MaiChoua.Thao@dpi.wi.gov>; Washington, Nicole M. DPI <Nicole.Washington@dpi.wi.gov>; Williams-Griffin, Bianca DPI <Bianca.Williams-Griffin@dpi.wi.gov>; Mouw, Tamara A. DPI <Tamara.Mouw@dpi.wi.gov>; Fuller, Rita K. DPI <Rita.Fuller@dpi.wi.gov>

Dear Cabinet,

As members of the Women of Color Employee Resource group, we are writing this letter to collectively express our disappointment in the creation of, and communication about, the Partnerships and Equitable Practices Team under the Office of the State Superintendent.

Our objections are as follows:

1. According to DPI's e-learning course, the Equity Decision & Policy Tool was designed to integrate explicit consideration of equity in decisions related to policies, practices, programs, and budgets. Once again, the agency has failed to utilize and disregard our own tool.
2. The DPI Cabinet arrived at a critical decision behind closed doors, distancing themselves from the surmountable amount of work that staff of color has done over the years to advocate and envision the birthing of a "real" equity department. The formation of this team was a hierarchical and unilateral decision made by leaders of a governmental agency that continues to erase the contributions of staff at DPI and communities of color across the state of Wisconsin. Ultimately, by doing so this action seeks to continue beliefs and actions that support white supremacy and [white supremacy culture](#) throughout the agency.
3. The DPI committees charged with promoting and overseeing equity in the agency were not consulted in the creation of this team. Although many members of the Women of Color Employee Resource Group (WOC/ERG), State Superintendent's Affirmative Action Advisory Committee (SSAAAC), Love in Action, Equity Inclusion, Monitoring and Implementation Systems (EIMIS), Equity Connect, supported and have advocated for the need of an Equity team, their expertise were institutionally removed from any discussion, collaboration or thought partnership as there were no formal or informal communication on the implementation of this team.

The speedy implementation of an important and historical team for any state agency robbed our state of a well-thought out process, that at the very least would afford our staff of color to interview and potentially, be selected to a director position. Rather, it was a decision of this body to continue to invest, support and lift the voice of our white colleagues. In contrast, this week our Governor and the Department of Health Services announced a historical hire after engaging with their staff of color and external partners in a national search to create the first [legitimate](#) Office of Health Equity.

Given the arguments above, we collectively disavow this newly formed office and respectfully request that Cabinet dismantle the team effective immediately. We are grateful for the members appointed to this team and apologize for the suffering of this reckless process.

The Women of Color ERG (WOC)'s vision includes a team led by institutionally marginalized staff; a department that encapsulates a vision of educational justice; merging the internal work of the department and the external work needed. In a state that perpetually ranks among the worst for our

Black students, highlighting [extreme racial disparities](#) and a predominantly white state agency with dismal advances to recruit, hire and retain staff of color, this decision demonstrates a great level of carelessness to communities of color everywhere.

Further, we ask that Cabinet engage with multiple stakeholders in a legitimate process guided by our Equity Decision & Policy Tool to create an Educational Equity Team.

We look forward to hearing from you and engaging in meaningful conversations with Women of Color ERG.

Thank you,

Members of the Women of Color ERG

Equity Decision and Policy Tool ecourse https://media.dpi.wi.gov/fred/equity/policy-tool/story_html5.html retrieved 10/3/21

White Supremacy Culture

[WhiteSupremacyCulture.pdf](#) by Tema Okun and changeworkDR retrieved 10/3/21

White Culture Worksheet developed by M. Potapchuk, MP Associates. Transforming White Privilege: A 21st Century Leadership Capacity, ©CAPD, MP Associates, World Trust Educational Services, 2012 [WHITE CULTURE WORKSHEET \(harvard.edu\)](#) retrieved 10/3/21

White Supremacy Culture. From Dismantling Racism: A Workbook for Social Change Groups, by Kenneth Jones and Tema Okun, ChangeWork, 2001 [White Supremacy Culture.pdf \(texas.gov\)](#).

[Race in the Heartland, Wisconsin's Extreme Racial Disparity](#) by Collin Gordon, October, 2009 retrieved 10/03/21

Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have additional questions.

Take care,

Shay Morris, MBA

Grants Specialist

Title I and School Support Team

Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction

Phone: 608-264-9324

Meeshay.morris@dpi.wi.gov

