

Submitter: Gary Cobb

On Behalf
Of:

Committee: House Committee On Emergency Management, General
Government, and Veterans

Measure: HB2650

Greetings elected officials, guests and coalition members,

My name is Gary Cobb (he/him/his) and I am the founder of GCOBB CONSULTING. Prior to this, I worked in the non-profit sector for a little over 22 years. Over the years I've had the honor of being on several different workgroups, committees, advisory groups and commissions at the State level. I want to share that these workgroups and such were extremely homogenous and lacked persons of color as well as folks with lived experience related to topics and or legislation said workgroups participated in. Though I believe there has been progress at the State to correct this problem of equity it's still seems to be progress in theory only.

Example here, after a recent legislative session I was asked to be part of a workgroup relating to a bill that passed. I was honored and accepted the offer. Not too long after accepting, emails went out with all the folks who would be participating. I inquired as to who else from the community sector are part of this and are any of them communities of color that had been impacted by the policy being discussed? If there is one thing I learned from being part of this awesome Transforming Justice Coalition, it's to always center equity in the conversation. Plus, name it when I see it, or don't see it. I was told by the conveners of the workgroup that they had reached out to culturally specific organizations, however I wasn't recognizing or seeing any on the emails going around as we were setting up times and dates to meet.

When our first meeting happened and during introductions, I called out that I wasn't seeing any culturally specific groups in our midst. I was told that invites were sent out and no groups responded, or the ones reached out to couldn't make it. I suggested we hold off starting till we get at least one culturally specific community group at the table. I was told that this wouldn't be possible because by statute the workgroup had to have their recommendations in by a certain and quick timeline. And it seemed to be implied that since I, at the time, worked for a culturally responsive organization with culturally specific programs this was a "fix" to this obvious problem.

As I reflected on this, it made me think about the different tables I've been at and how I might have been asked to participate. Having folks that look like me being at

the table simply because I work at an organization that is culturally responsive and has culturally specific programming, and not have a person or organization that is of color is disingenuous and basically "code switching" at its finest form.

We need to and can do better, HB-2650 will achieve this! Thank You.