

From: [Heather Benedict](#)
To: [ercommittee](#)
Cc: [pcecommission@gmail.com](#); [PCEXCUTIVE](#); [Derek Young](#)
Subject: Comment to PC Equity Review Committee: Lack of Diversity on Pierce County Ethics Commission
Date: Thursday, August 11, 2022 3:21:14 PM

Dear Pierce County Equity Review Committee,

I have raised concerns to County Council and Executive regarding the selection process to fill two vacancies on the Pierce County Ethics Commission. I have received no response from either branch. Thus, my concerns have fallen on deaf ears. Thus, I am reaching out to your organization to comment publicly on the lack of diversity on this commission and the Executive's failure to appoint members with diverse backgrounds. Currently, up for a vote scheduled for 8/16/22 are two nominees in [Resolution R2022-114](#), Blake Patton and Robert Batey. However, the resumes of these two individuals are not made public. My concern is the lack of transparency in the process - the nominees may not be the most experienced, best-suited, and highest qualified nominees and have been selected by Executive Dammeier through his Rolodex and did not make it a fair process. We do not know, but it is questionable that this is happening. For example, Mr. Batey only has one year of private sector experience yet is filling a private sector role; how is only one year of experience in private sector work the most qualified? Nothing is known about Blake Patton; as there is no LinkedIn profile, website, or Facebook page, there is nothing on this individual to understand whether they're qualified for this role and their beliefs on diversity. How can the county council approve the nominations knowing nothing about the nominees? I think being a member of the KKK could be considered the private sector, and as far as I am concerned, this could be Blake Patton's background - we do not know.

My other **concern is the lack of diversity on the ethics commission** - the commission only has one female of the five positions, the remaining four commission members being older, white males. It also has three attorney members (making the majority vote), whereas the [commission bylaws](#) only require one member to be an attorney, so why allow the attorneys the majority vote? One attorney is enough. It is supposed to be a non-bias commission comprised of at least three members of the public sector from the private sector (there is no minimum requirement for public sector backgrounds, all five members could be from the private sector). However, the public sector currently holds the majority vote because there are not the required three commission members from the private sector. No one of color is on this board; it greatly lacks diversity. **It is screaming for help from your committee.** If this is supposed to be a nonbias board, why is there no diversity among the commission members?

At yesterday's monthly ethics commission meeting, it was noted there were two anonymous complaints submitted. Because they were from anonymous individuals, the complaints were automatically dismissed without determining whether there was probable cause. I do not believe the county has whistleblower protections, so complainants are scared of speaking up and identifying themselves for fear of retribution by county officials. This committee should consider recommending to the county council to establish a resolution that protects complainants from retribution. There is only a confidentiality clause, but once the complaint is investigated and closed, the complaint is subject to public records requests; thus, their name could be released publicly.

Having a diverse background of ethics commission members and policies in place to protect complainants (whistleblowers) from retribution from county officials is important for the

county to progress toward equal rights and diversity. No one should feel silenced.

Thank you for your consideration, and I would ask that my letter/e-mail be made public on your website as my public comment.

Regards,

Heather Benedict

Concerned Citizen

District 2, the City of Edgewood Born and Raised

Great granddaughter to Elsie Lincoln Benedict, famous women's suffrage leader from 100+ years ago, and champion of the 19th federal amendment giving women the right to vote.