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February 2025

## Nothing About Us, Without Us



Dear Friends,

A core principle of equity and social movements is to center the voices of those most directly impacted by the issue or injustice being addressed. It's about empowering communities with direct lived experience to be instrumental in shaping policies to address what they're experiencing. The disability rights movement is credited with a slogan that captures this principle — "Nothing about us, without us." In other words, policies, procedures, rules, etc.

should not be created for any community without explicit input from the very community that these rules will impact.

This practice recognizes that lived experience is a form of expertise and should be valued. "Nothing about us, without us" can also lead to a fair, inclusive distribution of power, ensuring that decision-makers listen to and collaborate with impacted communities.

In this month's newsletter, I'm proud to share an example of how the Port of Seattle embraces this principle to promote fairness and inclusion in our organization.

Last year, a group of Port employees created an employee resource group (ERG) called the Disability Equity Network (DEN). Nic Tanner (Environmental Management Specialist) and Andrew Khouw (Indoor Navigation Program Manager) led the charge to organize Port employees and formalize the group as an ERG. While disability rights are personally important to both Nic and Andrew, they were invested in creating this group to build a community of support for employees navigating and/or impacted by disability, to remove the stigma associated with disability, and, ultimately, to support the organization in improving disability accommodations for all employees.

"About a quarter of the population has a disability. It's so broad that even if you don't have one yourself, you're going to know someone who does," said Andrew

Khouw.

Members of DEN have begun working with the Port's Human Resources team to explore improvements to existing accommodation policies. Additionally, in DEN's talks with HR and Port leadership, there are exciting opportunities for the Port to be an exemplary employer for the disability community. These types of changes, which center the voice of DEN and employees with disabilities, would improve access for both disabled and non-disabled employees.

"I think the Port does a good job promoting equity, and I see a lot of opportunity for disability equity at the Port," said Nic Tanner. "I know the pressure of having a hidden disability at a workplace, and I know how some other workplaces treat people with disabilities. I know of situations where people have had to leave workplaces because of how they have been treated due to their disabilities."

DEN believes that the Port of Seattle is positioned to be a leader in accessibility and disability rights for both its employees and the broader community. In 2025, DEN will focus on continuing to grow its membership, building a welcoming and safe space for the disability community and allies, and educating Port employees on the importance of disability justice and how to advance accessibility for all employees. To that end, DEN has advice for us all:

- **Stay home when you're sick.** One way to respect people of all needs and abilities is to actively prevent the spread of illness.
- **Set clear expectations for in-person meetings/gatherings.** To create spaces where people can actively and fully participate, take the time to learn about food and dietary restrictions, physical and mental needs, and cultural norms and practices.
- **Normalize talking about disability.** Disabilities can be physical, mental, visible, and invisible. People with disabilities often experience prejudice and discrimination, even unintentionally. If we learn and talk more about ability and access, we can create a culture and community where people can be their authentic selves.

"This is a moment when we need to double down on our work. We need to know our rights and be willing to fight for them. We need to advocate for better accessibility for all," said Andrew Khouw.

In Unity,



**Bookda Gheisar**  
Senior Director  
Office of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (OEDI)

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## Centering Equity and Taking Action

## Port takes two steps forward on increasing airport worker access to affordable childcare



As part of the Port's ongoing efforts to make Seattle-Tacoma International Airport (SEA) a world-class place for employment, the Port of Seattle Commission approved two major steps toward increasing accessible, affordable, and flexible childcare services for airport workers during the Commission meeting on February 11. In the immediate term, the Port will create a Childcare Navigator Program offering comprehensive, culturally, and linguistically appropriate services to help interested workers navigate the existing childcare ecosystem. Second, as part of the Port's goal to site a childcare facility at or near the airport, the Commission directed the development of a feasibility study to provide the necessary information to make this vision a reality.

[Learn more →](#)

## Black History Month Port Spotlight with Delmas Whittaker





Since 1976, the United States has celebrated Black History Month in February due to Carter G. Woodson's establishment of Negro History Week in 1926. This month draws attention to the significant contributions and achievements of African Americans throughout history. The Port of Seattle has benefitted from the brilliant minds and tremendous efforts of the many Black people who have worked for the Port. One of those brilliant minds is that of Delmas Whittaker, Director of Marine Maintenance.

[Learn more about Delmas →](#)

## A Port for the Future

On February 6, more than 300 community and industry partners gathered in Renton for the annual State of the Port. During the event, attendees heard from Executive Director Steve Metruck and all five Port Commissioners, highlighting accomplishments from 2024 and envisioning goals for the year ahead. The 2025 annual budget and five-year capital plan are grounded in the Port's values and its mission to promote economic opportunities and quality of life in the region by advancing trade, travel, commerce, and job creation in an equitable, accountable, and environmentally responsible manner. [Read the 2024 State of the Port](#) and [watch highlights from the event](#).



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