



City Council Referral Request

Tracking Number
(Provided by Staff)

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here to enter
text.

Date of
Referral

1/5/2025

Requester Councilmember Vanderpool

Referral To Study Session

Work Session

Staff

Committee of the Chairs

Community Livability & Public Safety

Finance Committee

Land Use & Environment Committee

Advisory Committee (type here)

Problem Statement

A clear concise description of the issue(s) that need(s) to be addressed.

Despite progress toward equity, community members with diverse family and relationship structures, including single-parent households, multi-generational families, blended families, chosen families, and non-monogamous arrangements, continue to face systemic barriers. Housing affordability models often assume dual-income households, creating disproportionate challenges for single-family providers. These inequities intersect with other forms of discrimination, limiting access to housing, healthcare, education, and public services due to the absence of explicit legal protections. U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development data shows that familial status discrimination accounted for 8.5% of all housing discrimination complaints under the Fair Housing Act. A 2024 survey by the Organization for Polyamory and Ethical Non-monogamy (OPEN) found significant stigma and discrimination reported by adults in non-monogamous relationships. The lack of legal recognition forces many families to conceal their household composition to avoid harm, creating barriers to care, community participation, and family stability. These disparities disproportionately impact LGBTQIA2S+ households, blended and chosen families, and other diverse relationship structures, demonstrating the need for Olympia to evaluate local legislation that affirms and protects diverse family structures. Periodically, community members have requested that the City of Olympia take action by evaluating and advancing local policies and protections that affirm diverse family and relationship structures. Currently, public dialogue and testimony on this issue is limited due to community members' fear of being "out" and targeted based on the makeup of their family or relationship structure.

Request

What is being requested to assist in addressing the issue described in the problem statement?

The proposed referral ordinance would add "family or relationship structure" as a basis for protections wherever protected groups are articulated within existing code. Model legislation is available, and city-specific legislative language can be drafted by the Polyamory Legal Advocacy Coalition in coordination with the City Attorney.

(See attached document: [Model Diverse Family and Relationship Structure Nondiscrimination Legislation – An ORDINANCE to Protect Family Inclusion and Relationship Diversity](#))

Key Definitions

For the purposes of this ordinance, "family or relationship structure" includes but is not limited to:

- The composition of interrelationships within a household
- Involvement in intimate personal relationships between consenting adults
- Non-normative and non-nuclear family arrangements, including multi-partner and multi-parent families, blended (step) families, multi-generational households, single-parents-by-choice, chosen families, and similar configurations

Stakeholder Engagement

Before advancing housing-related changes, the City should engage Fair Housing partners and key housing stakeholders. These partners have maintained consistent involvement with the City and have requested collaboration on housing policy decisions. Early engagement will help ensure alignment with existing policies and support equitable and well-informed implementation.

Implementation and Enforcement

The ordinance would be enforced through:

- Civil action by aggrieved individuals, and/or
- Discretionary enforcement by the City Attorney

Damages for each violation are three times the actual harm or a minimum of \$1,000, plus attorney fees for successful claims.

Cost and Impact

- No additional city staff or resources required
- No impact on City budget
- Enforcement through existing legal mechanisms
- Significant anticipated positive impact on family stability, access to services and community well-being

Relationship to City Business or Proposed City Business/Services

Describe how this will enhance what is already offered and/or what it will provide that is not currently available. Why is this the City's issue to address? How will this create a more adaptive and resilient organization? How will this enhance the City's work to further equity, climate, and social justice?

On January 28, 2025, the Olympia City Council adopted a resolution declaring Olympia a sanctuary city for LGBTQIA2S+ community members, reaffirming the City's commitment to protecting civil rights, rejecting discrimination, and upholding Washington's Law Against Discrimination. The resolution commits the City to reviewing policies for inclusivity, reducing barriers to services, strengthening legal and institutional protections, and taking proactive steps to ensure all residents feel safe, supported, and able to live openly.

This referral directly advances those commitments by translating the values and principles articulated in the Sanctuary City resolution into enforceable law. By adding *family or relationship structure* as a protected class within existing City code, the proposed ordinance operationalizes the City's stated intent to expand civil rights protections, address gaps in anti-discrimination coverage, and reduce barriers faced by community members in diverse families and relationships, both within and beyond the LGBTQIA2S+ community.

The proposed ordinance aligns with the City's ongoing equity, belonging, and public safety efforts by strengthening legal protections through existing civil enforcement mechanisms, ensuring consistency across City policies and services, and affirming Olympia's role as a leader in inclusive governance.

The Social Justice & Equity Commission plays a key advisory role in advancing equity and inclusion in Olympia. The Commission partners with the community and City leadership to analyze data, elevate community voices, and recommend policies and practices that reduce disparities and promote fairness. Through their work, including engagement with the 2023 Experiences of Discrimination in Olympia Report, the Commission helps guide efforts to build a more just, inclusive, and welcoming city for all. This report documents the lived experiences of community members who have faced discrimination in Olympia. Grounded in community input, the report identifies patterns, impacts, and areas of concern across systems and institutions. This recommendation to protect diverse families and relationship structures further expands the City's work to address discrimination in Olympia.

Connection to Comprehensive Plan

Choose all that apply.

Public Safety

Ensure that all Olympians feel safe and receive reliable, compassionate care.

Community Livability

Enrich quality of life and foster belonging for all who live, work, or spend time in Olympia.

Environmental Stewardship

Preserve and enhance Olympia's natural resources.

Economy

Promote a thriving and diversified economy with pathways to prosperity for everyone.

Organizational Excellence

Deliver exceptional services and programs that are responsive to the needs of the community.

Well-Planned City

Plan for, construct and maintain a built environment that ensures the wellbeing of current and future generations.

Options

Describe proposed options for moving the idea or issue forward for the meeting body to consider.

1. Introduce an ordinance for Council consideration based on available model legislation, with revisions informed by City Attorney review and public comment during the legislative process.

Timing

Is this issue time sensitive, are there other timing factors to consider?

The resolution is proposed for consideration in upcoming Council meetings, with targeted adoption on February 10, 2026, to coincide with Valentines Day.

Supporting Documentation (Work Plan, Transportation Master Plan, Parks Plan, etc)

Are there documents that support your request or should be considered?

- Protecting Diverse Families and Relationships across the United States
- MODEL DIVERSE FAMILY AND RELATIONSHIP STRUCTURE NONDISCRIMINATION LEGISLATION AN ORDINANCE to Protect Family Inclusion and Relationship Diversity
- A RESOLUTION OF THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF OLYMPIA, WASHINGTON, DECLARING THE CITY OF OLYMPIA A SANCTUARY CITY FOR LGBTQIA2S+ PEOPLE
- Olympia Experiences of Discrimination Report

Councilmember Signatures

Two Councilmembers must support the request including the Chair of the Committee of referral. (Cannot be a committee quorum unless discussed at an open public meeting of the committee.)

Robert Vanderpool

Sponsoring Councilmember

1. Dontae Payne
Mayor

2. Yến Huỳnh
Mayor Pro Tem

Staff Supplement

Staff will review the request to generate administrative impacts to be considered as part of proposal (staff to initial after their review):

Budget Impacts: Click or tap here to enter text.

Legal Review (to include regulatory authority): Click or tap here to enter text.

Policy implications: Click or tap here to enter text.

Implementation Considerations: Click or tap here to enter text.

Staff Liaison: Click or tap here to enter text.