



# INTERIM RECORD

A SUMMARY OF INTERIM ACTIVITIES

2024

September

Volume 37, No. 5

PUBLISHED BY  
LEGISLATIVE RESEARCH COMMISSION  
LEGISLATURE.KY.GOV/LEGISLATION/PAGES/DEFAULT.ASPX

## Legislators hear from university presidents about DEI policies

by Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Legislators on the Interim Joint Committee on Education received updates from five university presidents on Sept. 17 regarding diversity, equity and inclusion policies on college campuses.

Committee members volleyed questions to the presidents of the University of Kentucky, the University of Louisville, Eastern Kentucky University, Murray State University and Western Kentucky University. The updates follow the 2024 Regular Session when DEI topics were widely debated.

UK President Eli Capilouto said he encourages those at the school to ask themselves, "Did we care? Were we fair? and Did we give everyone a fair shot?"

He said he hears the concern that everyone be represented in what is said and done at the university. These concerns are voiced from faculty, staff and students.

"So, we're here today to find a common approach to a common concern, and that is how we support everyone regardless of where they are from, what they think and who they are," he said.

Capilouto said changes at UK were announced



Senate Minority Caucus Chair Reginald Thomas, D-Lexington, speaks during the September meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Education. The meeting dealt mainly with diversity, equity and inclusion policies at postsecondary institutions.

approximately a month ago. They include the closure of the Office for Institutional Diversity.

"The work of representing everyone needs to take place everywhere," he said. "Units that support all students have moved to the Office for Student Success where there already exists a suite of services, whether they be for first-generation

students, students with disabilities, individuals who have particular mental health concerns. There are a whole host of things."

Rep. Steve Rawlings, R-Burlington, said he has concerns about teachings on victim ideology, microaggressions, toxic masculinity and more. He asked Capilouto if the changes are simply rebranding and shifting DEI concepts to other programs and departments.

"We did redefine and rewrite those job descriptions. When I met with the individuals that had some of those terms in their job descriptions or titles, I learned firsthand that their responsibilities extend to everyone," Capilouto said.

Those at the university seek to respond to and serve everyone, and some of the topics might be a subject of inquiry in a classroom and a fair debate, but not part of trainings, Capilouto added.

Rep. Tina Bojanowski, D-Louisville, asked Capilouto how much of the taxpayers' money was used to prepare documents and slides shared with legislators. She said the entire process regarding DEI isn't a microaggression, it's "a macroaggression

Continued on page 2

# DEI policies, from page 1

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against universities who are trying to ensure that all of their students' needs are being met."

She said she is uncomfortable with the situation and embarrassed that the committee met to discuss it.

"From my perspective, the problem is the demonization of diversity, equity and inclusion programs by certain members of this body," she said.

UofL President Kim Schatzel said the school's goal is to, "focus relentlessly on success of all our students...where no student is left behind."

Senate Minority Caucus Chair Reginald Thomas, D-Lexington, asked Schatzel if she has any reservations about the changes at UofL.

"I spent seven years with the same goal and same priority at Towson University where we were very

directed with being able to support student success for all students, and we made the same kind of changes there as we're doing here," she said.

Rep. Candy Massaroni, R-Bardstown, said UofL provides additional salaries for DEI employees, and she asked if their salaries are based on race or sex.

Schatzel replied they are not.

Continued on page 7

## Commission discusses bourbon industry barriers, solutions

by Jordan Hensley - LRC Public Information

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FRANKFORT — Kentuckians Sean and Tia Edwards made history several years ago when they opened the first African American-owned distillery in Kentucky.

On Aug. 27, the couple spoke to the Commission on Race and Access to Opportunity on the barriers minorities face working in the bourbon industry.

The commission is a statutory committee comprised of select Kentucky legislators and citizen members who study issues related to education, health, economic opportunity, justice, and other sectors to identify areas of improvement in providing services and opportunities for minority communities.

The Edwardses said the goal with their company – Fresh Bourbon Distillery – was to create an approachable product that anyone can enjoy, but they have faced some barriers being an African American-owned company.

Historically, the bourbon industry has been led by white men since the end of the Civil War due to many Black Americans moving away from the area during reconstruction, Sean Edwards said.

"We're happy about being in the industry, but you also deal with inherit prejudices that people have and ideas," Sean Edwards said, adding a misconception some buyers have is that their bourbon is being marketed as a bourbon for Black people when it is a bourbon for everyone.

Working with the banking industry has also been an issue for Fresh Bourbon Distillery, Sean Edwards said.

"(Banking) has been a very hard challenge for us and other people we



Senate Democratic Floor Leader Gerald A. Neal, D-Louisville, shares his thoughts on barriers minorities face in the bourbon industry during the August meeting of the Commission on Race and Access to Opportunity.

know in this industry and other industries that have African Americans breaking into it ... because banking is built on relationships," Sean Edwards said.

The Edwardses learned by speaking with other startup distilleries that they

Continued on page 3

# Bourbon industry,

## from page 2

had access to more capital due to relationships rather than credit profiles or business plans.

Senate Democratic Floor Leader Gerald A. Neal, D-Louisville, said it's important for the legislature to talk about what barriers exist in order to move forward.

"I think that the initiative is very important as well as overdue, but the barrier parts of it certainly have struck me with respect to this," Neal said. "We need to look deeper into that and how we can do things from a policy standpoint to alleviate some of that."

The Edwardses said the legislature and the consumer can do several things to help break down some of the barriers facing Black bourbon distillers in Kentucky.

"How can the consumer like myself and the commonwealth contribute to breaking those bar-

riers" citizen member Katima Smith-Willis asked.

Tia Edwards said when it comes to restaurants, it helps if the customer requests the bourbon.

"The more that it is requested by the consumer, it's going to force them to bring it in even if they don't want to," Tia Edwards said. "Like Sean said, we've been told 'Oh, this is a bourbon for Black people.' Well, no, it's a bourbon for everyone."

Sean Edwards agreed, and said policy wise, tax incentives might be something to consider.

"I think tax incentives to banks that work with underrepresented communities would be a good starting place," he said. "There might be some that exist, but creating and establishing relationships with the banking community or banks around Kentucky would do well for the African American population."

Rep. Killian Timoney, R-Nicholasville, who co-chairs the commission, said he thinks the Edwardses have a lot to offer when it comes to being entrepreneurs.

"The Governor's School for Entrepreneurs is something that's put on every summer. I think that's definitely a venue that you need to take a look at and explore because there are probably a lot of people who have ideas, but they don't know how to materialize them," Timoney said.

Sen. Amanda Mays Bledsoe, R-Lexington, who also serves as a co-chair, agreed there is a need to create a pathway for more diversity in the bourbon industry, such as scholarship opportunities for university students.

Mays Bledsoe said sometimes all it takes is a student seeing someone who is like them to realize they can accomplish that goal too.

## Legislators express concerns about human trafficking

by Nancy Royden - LRC Public Information

FRANKFORT — Members of the Interim Joint Committee on Health Services heard testimony on Aug. 28 from a human trafficking survivor, those who assist victims and former victims, and the leader of a data and research group.

"I live in Columbus, Ohio and have been doing this work for 15 years – sharing my story all around the country trying to open up people's eyes to what the words human trafficking mean and what they look like here in the United States," said Theresa Flores, a human trafficking survivor, licensed social worker and founder of The SOAP (Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution) Project.

Flores said her abusers kept track of her and threatened to kill her family. She was terrified and stuck in the situation when she was 15 and 16 years old. Today, there are still many people who don't know about human trafficking, and not only should the traffickers be prosecuted, but also the buyers, she said.

Committee Co-Chair Rep. Kimberly Poore Moser, R-Taylor Mill, said human trafficking is probably more



Sen. Shelley Funke Frommeyer, R-Alexandria, speaks during the August meeting of the Interim Joint Committee on Health Services.

prolific now due to social media and the different ways people connect versus in the 1980s. She said it's scary to think about human trafficking and what's happening to the victims. She thanked Flores for coming forward with her experiences.

"I really appreciate your sharing your story. It is difficult to hear. It is difficult to understand that this is going on in the U.S. and in Kentucky, but I felt like it was important for everyone to hear you and to hear what we are working on here in Kentucky," she said.

Sen. Lindsey Tichenor, R-Smithfield, said human trafficking is shocking and staggering, and buyers should be held accountable. She cited familial trafficking, unaccompanied minors who are unaccounted for, sextortion, child pornography and online exploitation. She said those who experience these things are all victims and are being continually sold to buyers.

Rep. Scott Sharp, R-Ashland, said he's concerned about children becoming victims of human trafficking

Continued on page 7



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## DEI policies, from page 2

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Sen. Lindsey Tichenor, R-Smithfield, said testimony was given during the 2024 Regular Session by a university student who Tichenor said was unjustly not chosen to be a resident assistant.

"The efforts of DEI, I think at their beginning, were not to be divisive, but to create a more inclusive environment," she said. "But unfortunately, we see that it has created divisive and exclusive situations for a student to be told she couldn't be hired because she was too white and too Christian."

WKU President Timothy Caboni said the university is a guardian of free speech, and it has an obligation to establish an environment where a wide range of viewpoints are exchanged.

"Every student matters. And we remain committed to providing a support structure tailored and responsive to the needs of every student at our institution, from first-year programs and student organizations to global study and research opportunities," Caboni said. "And just as important, we remain committed to ensuring a sense of

belonging and to protecting freedom of expression."

Rep. Timmy Truett, R-McKee, said the meeting offered legislators understanding.

"Talks like this need to happen. We need time like this to where you can explain why you are doing things and we can ask you why are you doing these things. So, this has been very informative to me, and I want to take this time to thank you guys for listening. You guys have listened," he said.

## Human trafficking, from page 3

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at the Mexico-United States border.

"I appreciate this presentation today, and as a father of two daughters, it just really gets me mad," he said.

Two authors of the 2024 Kentucky Statewide Human Trafficking Data Report, Glenn Harden of Asbury University, and Marissa Castellanos of The Coterie, testified during the meeting. The report stems from the Kentucky Statewide Human Trafficking Task Force, which was established in 2013.

Harden testified that the report contains a 10-point recommendation summary of ways to address human trafficking in the commonwealth. It calls for increasing institutional capacity, expanding community resilience through policies to promote economic opportunities and other measures, and prioritizing survivor-centered human trafficking training for law enforcement and other stakeholders.

Harden said labor trafficking in Kentucky also needs to be addressed. He noted that certain visa holders are especially vulnerable to labor trafficking, but this can also happen in familial settings.

"Often people think of human trafficking as stranger danger, which exists. But the importance of recognizing that human trafficking can occur in the family, to raise awareness and to address those appropriate intervention issues are critical," he said.

Rep. Adrielle Camuel, D-Lexington, asked if there are programs to help those dealing with K-12 students recognize signs of trafficking or similar issues.

Castellanos said on the national level, the Department of Education has some helpful webinars and the Office on Trafficking in Persons has funded grants for prevention education for school districts. Kentucky districts could possibly benefit from these grants, she said. Others testified about additional resources.

Sen. Shelley Funke Frommeyer, R-Alexandria, said she got to meet Charity, a dog used by the Kentucky Office of the Attorney General to detect electronics such as USBs and cell phones possibly used in human trafficking and other cases.

Flores said although survivors' stories are hard to hear, they are reality. She said human trafficking is a highly prevalent crime, and sextortion is rising at epidemic rates.

"So, it is time that we really take a stronghold against this, and I'm confident that a great state like Kentucky can do some really good work," she said.

The next committee meeting is scheduled for Sept. 25.

# Committee Meetings

Minutes for Statutory Committees that met recently may be found at the following sites:

**Interim Joint Committee on Agriculture:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Ag/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Ag/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Appropriations and Revenue:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/A&R/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/A&R/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Economic Development and Workforce Investment:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/EDWI/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/EDWI/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Education:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Education/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Education/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Families and Children:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/IJCF&C/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/IJCF&C/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Health Services:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/IJCHS/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/IJCHS/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Judiciary/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Judiciary/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Licensing, Occupations, and Administrative Regulations:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/LO&AR/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/LO&AR/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Local Government:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Loc\\_Gov/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Loc_Gov/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Natural Resources and Energy:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/NR\\_&\\_E/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/NR_&_E/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on State Government:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/St\\_Gov/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/St_Gov/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Tourism, Small Business, and Information Technology:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/TSBIT/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/TSBIT/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Transportation:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Trans/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Trans/minutes_all.html)

**Interim Joint Committee on Veterans, Military Affairs, and Public Protection:**

[https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Vets/minutes\\_all.html](https://apps.legislature.ky.gov/committees/interim/Vets/minutes_all.html)

## LRC Publications 2024 Price List

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Daily Record Mailed: \$165

(plus postage)

Friday Record Mailed: \$38.50

(plus postage)

Individual Record Pick up: \$2.75

Individual Record Mailed: \$2.75

(plus postage)

### Bills

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(Pick up): \$630

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### Publications

1-10 copies: Free to general public;

larger numbers of free copies

are available to schools and state

agencies (*Copies over preapproved*

*limits require agency approval*)

### Administrative Regulations

Administrative Register (monthly):

\$120.00

### Acts of the General Assembly (2023)

Regular Session: \$80 (2 volumes)

Special Sessions: Priced after printing

### Journals

House and Senate Complete Set,

House Set, Senate Set: Priced after

printing

(*All prices subject to 6% Kentucky sales tax*

*within Kentucky and subject to change*)



2024 Interim

## LEGISLATIVE RECORD

Published monthly by the Legislative Research Commission, the *Interim Record* is designed to inform the citizens of Kentucky of the between-sessions work of the General Assembly.

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The Commission and its staff, by law and by practice, perform numerous fact-finding and service functions for members of the Legislature, employing professional, clerical and other employees required when the General Assembly is in session and during the interim period between sessions. These employees, in turn, assist committees and individual legislators in preparing legislation. Other services include conducting studies and investigations, organizing and staffing committee meetings and public hearings, maintaining official legislative records and other reference materials, providing information about the Legislature to the public, compiling and publishing administrative regulations, administering a legislative intern program, conducting orientation programs for new legislators, and publishing a daily index and summary of legislative actions during sessions.

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2024 Interim

# LEGISLATIVE RECORD

KENTUCKY GENERAL ASSEMBLY

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