

From: noreply@civicplus.com
To: [Jill Nixon](#); [Jake Logan](#); [Executive](#); [Cathy Halka](#)
Subject: Online Form Submittal: Advisory Group Application
Date: Wednesday, April 30, 2025 8:14:47 PM

Advisory Group Application

Step 1

Application for Appointment to Whatcom County Advisory Groups

Public Statement

THIS IS A PUBLIC DOCUMENT: As a candidate for a public advisory group, the information provided will be available to the County Council, County Executive, and the public. All advisory group members are expected to be fair, impartial, and respectful of the public, County staff, and each other. Failure to abide by these expectations may result in revocation of appointment and removal from the appointive position.

Title	Mrs.
First Name	Laura
Last Name	Castro-Benzing
Today's Date	4/30/2025

Do you live in Whatcom County? Yes

Do you have a different mailing address? *Field not completed.*

Secondary Telephone *Field not completed.*

Step 2

1. Name of Advisory Northwest Senior Service

Group

2. Do you meet the residency, employment, and/or affiliation requirements of the position for which you're applying?

Yes

3. Which Council district do you live in?

District 2

4. Have you ever been a member of this Advisory Group

No

5. Do you or your spouse have a financial interest in or are you an employee or officer of any business or agency that does business with Whatcom County?

No

6. Have you declared candidacy (as defined by RCW 42.17A.055) for a paid elected office in any jurisdiction within the county?

No

experience, qualifications, & interest in response to the following questions

7. Please describe your occupation (or former occupation if retired), qualifications, professional and/or community activities, and education

I am a state program and policy consultant, working primarily in long term care and aging policy. Through this work, I developed health policy expertise in Medicare and Medicaid, contributing to state waivers to expand and evaluate innovative programs within Medicaid. My experience cross-cuts a range of challenges that older adults face from dementia care, post-acute care, LTSS disparities, and aging in community. Through my work exploring how to align the WA Cares Fund with existing Washington Medicaid programs, I am familiar with programs relevant to local

Area Agencies on Aging.

Through my professional experience, I developed a mix of policy, data, and communication skills. I leverage my data background to advance data-informed and evidence-based initiatives and specialize in data communication. Weaving together data and personal narratives, I presented at both virtual and in-person Capitol Hill briefings and panels. My work has been published in Health Affairs, where I have written on long-term care and issues facing older adults.

I hold a Bachelor of Science in Biology from Duke University, with minors in Computational Biology & Bioinformatics and Creative Writing. During my time at Duke, I volunteered at a primarily Medicaid-funded nursing facility, which began my interest in working in long term care and aging. In a few short weeks, I will graduate with a Master of Science in Health Informatics with a Management concentration from George Mason University.

8. Please describe why you're interested in serving on this Advisory Group.

After years of working in long term care and aging consulting across a half dozen states, I am looking for a way to use my experience to support my local community. My work brings me to rooms where individuals from historically marginalized communities talk about equity and their experience with long term care as well as roundtables where experts vision a future for long term care. My role is to overlay those insights with my health policy background, to make ideas accessible and actionable to improve care for the people who need it.

In a time where the future of spending on social and long term care programs is unclear, I want to focus locally and use the skills I have built over the past few years to support the individuals in my community. My graduate program is ending in two weeks, and I have been looking forward to having additional capacity to volunteer in the community and potentially support the board in as many ways as I can. Thank you in advance for your consideration!

Appointment
Requirements

I understand and agree

Signature of applicant:

Laura Benzing (to be Castro-Benzin)

Place Signed /
Submitted

Bellingham, WA

(Section Break)

LAURA CASTRO-BENZING

STATE HEALTH POLICY RESEARCH, ANALYTICS, AND DEVELOPMENT



EDUCATION

George Mason University, M.S.

GPA 3.95

Fall 2021 - Spring 2025 (Expected)

Masters in Health Informatics,
Management Concentration

Duke University, B.S. GPA 3.95

Major | Biology

Minors | Computational Biology &
Bioinformatics, Creative Writing

SKILLS

- Policy Analysis
- Project Management
- Roundtable / Meeting Facilitation
- Stakeholder Engagement
- Data Analytics - RStudio
- MS Office Suite

INTERESTS

- Intergenerational housing
- Integrating whole-person care into healthcare (e.g., nutrition and housing supports)
- Age-friendly infrastructure

EXPERIENCE

ATI ADVISORY, REMOTE

SENIOR ANALYST, STATE PROGRAM AND POLICY | JANUARY 2024 - PRESENT
ANALYST, DATA AND POLICY | 2021- 2023

- Washington State Experience: Managed a \$1.2 million project on WA Cares Fund operations and financing.
- Aging in Community: Analyzed 250+ programs which help individuals age in the setting of their choice, with personal focus on community interdependence, and authored policy briefs on long term services and support (LTSS) financing.
- LTSS Equity: Organized focus group among individuals from historically marginalized communities with LTSS needs on intersectional perspectives and conducted analyses on disparities.
- Medicaid: Facilitated policy decision making drafted parts of Section 1115 Demonstrations for two states, and supported policy implementation.
- Post-Acute Care: Analyzed causes of hospital discharge delays and recommended solutions for an Oregon Task Force and authored report on capital in the nursing facility industry.
- Dementia Care: Researched how to strengthen Memory Care Assessment Clinics in TN and built provider billing guides for Dementia Care Aware initiative
- Health Plans: Conducted quantitative and qualitative analyses for the Better Medicare Alliance for 3 years, developed policy memos on non-medical benefits through health plans (Supplemental Benefits, In Lieu of Services, HRSN).

DUKE MARGOLIS CENTER FOR HEALTH POLICY, REMOTE

STUDENT RESEARCHER | MAY 2020 - MAY 2021

- Programmed Web Crawler to pull and analyze real-world evidence documents or FDA website to develop a database
- Conducted literature reviews and stakeholder surveys

PUBLICATIONS & SPEECHES

- **Laura Benzing**, Hannah Godlove, and Megan Burke. How States Can Support Individuals In The Long-Term Services and Supports Gap. Health Affairs. 2024.
- Hill briefing on Rural Medicare Beneficiaries. Better Medicare Alliance. April 2024.
- Webinar and panel. National Minority Quality Forum. Medicare Advantage Coverage in Minority Communities. March 2024.
- **Laura Benzing**, Allison Rizer, and Anne Tumlinson. How Integrated Programs Can Address The Challenges Of Limited English Proficiency For Dual Eligible Individuals. Health Affairs. January 2024.
- Conference session: Dementia Care Aware Billing for Primary Cares Providers. Healthy Industry Collaboration effort. December 2023.