

Community engagement and the need to share information related to SB275 - REVISION

“Community engagement and the need to share information related to SB275 In the first meetings of this Advisory Task Force in 2022, members identified community engagement as a top priority to focus on. We felt that the Task Force needed to do its part to 1) inform the community about the major changes that SB275 enacted, and 2) reach out to communities that were impacted by SB275 and/or address any concerns that communities had with the bill. (I’d remove the text highlighted in yellow)

Members of the Task Force realized that many Nevadans were not aware of the important changes that SB275 made to our state’s criminal and public health laws, especially the communities that were most affected by these changes. We wanted to ensure that, first, people living with HIV knew about the new rights they had after the bill’s passing. We also identified several other communities that needed to be informed of these changes to state law, including, but not limited to, law enforcement, first responders and other public employees, lawyers and criminal justice experts, and sex workers. (Green-question-what are the new rights?) Also what about sexual assault advocacy groups and the department of corrections?

Considering the structure of the Task Force, we found that it may be difficult for the Task Force to host or partner on educational events to help spread the word. One approach we decided we could take instead was to develop a fact sheet that could be disseminated to the public. Although other community groups have already begun to share information, such as the Nevada HIV Modernization Coalition and Silver State Equality, we felt that the community would greatly benefit from additional information sharing. We contacted Nevada Legal Services knowing that they’ve created helpful fact sheets for other legislation and state laws in the past. Luckily, Nevada Legal Services had the capacity to develop a fact sheet for SB275 thanks to a grant they had received. A representative from Nevada Legal Services attended our meeting in June to learn what we wanted on the fact sheet. The fact sheet is expected to be completed in August 2022. I believe that we changed the date for September for NV Legal services to edit and revise the fact sheets

The Task Force also thought of a few other strategies to reach certain communities. We felt that many police officers, prosecutors, and defense lawyers may not be aware of how SB275 impacts their work, especially in terms of arrests and prosecutions of people living with HIV and sex workers. To reach these professions, we realized that we might be able to publish informational pieces in specific publications, such as the Nevada Lawyer Magazine, the Vegas Beat Magazine, or even national publications for law enforcement and lawyers. Currently, Senator Dallas Harris is working on an article to be published in the [more info needed] about these changes to HIV law and policy.

In addition to informing the community about the bill, there were (I’d use “are”....question should this document be active/passive voice?) certain communities we wanted to engage with to ensure that they were content with certain provisions of the bill that affected their community. Outreach to the sex work community was a huge priority considering the repeal of NRS 201.356 and NRS 201.358. To reach this community, we contacted organizations such as the Cupcake Girls and the Sex Workers Alliance of Nevada. Task Force members informed representatives of these organizations of SB275, asked for their opinions about these legal changes, and invited members of their organizations to attend a meeting to speak during public comment. We also extended an invitation to these organizations to join the Task Force if they were interested.

Members of the Task Force also learned that one of SB275's changes may have had an unintended negative consequence. With the repeal of NRS 441A.320, health authorities could no longer test an alleged perpetrator of a sex relate crime. This change was concerning to health departments, law enforcement, and advocates of sexual assault victims. Consequently, the Task Force prioritized this issue and contacted the concerned parties in hopes of hearing their point of view and possibly learning of solutions. We reached out to contacts at the Washoe County and Southern Nevada Health Districts, the [Washoe County Sherriff's Office?], and the Nevada Coalition to End Domestic and Sexual Violence and Signs of Hope, a sexual assault resource organization in Southern Nevada. More information about this issue and our outreach can be found in the "NRS 441A.320" section of this report.

We also prioritized outreach to representatives of first responders, including the [firefighters union?]. The Task Force felt it was important to connect with them because of their opposition to the 2019 Task Force's recommendations regarding NRS. 441A.195. More information about this is in the "NRS 441A.195" section of the report.

Ultimately, the Task Force believes that additional outreach and education is extremely necessary to ensure that Nevadans are well aware of the changes made by SB275. Community advocates and organizations will play a major role in this education once the Task Force adjourns, and many members of the Task Force are committed to working with these individuals and groups to continue informing the public. We have also tried our best to engage all interested parties and solicit their opinions to ensure that any inadequacies of SB275 can be addressed during the 2023 Nevada Legislative Session. Going forward, the Task Force hopes to see continued collaboration around all of these issues."