

## President's Letter



Hello! My name is Whitney Cipolla, and I am the new Board President of Oklahomans for Equality. There have been many changes at OkEq over the past several years regarding staff and Board leadership. We have endured financial hardships and had to navigate harsh realities that face our community internally and externally. However, I am hopeful for the future of OkEq and believe there is a path forward.

In February, we launched a \$100K by Valentine's Day fundraising campaign, and I want to thank the community for investing in OkEq and showing Tulsa that our presence matters and is deeply valued.. We had over 1,100 community donors with an average donation of \$123, which raised nearly \$142,000. This has given us the time necessary to sustain operations while we pause, determine the best structure for our Center's leadership, and examine costs and revenue to ensure we are financially solvent and good stewards of our donors' money. I would like to provide an update on steps that have been or are in process to manage our current situation.

### Cost Reductions

Since this campaign, the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors has worked diligently to cut non-personnel-related monthly costs by nearly 7%.

In addition to reductions in non-personnel expenses, difficult decisions were implemented to our the Center's staffing structure. These changes involve the elimination and/or reduction of hours for multiple positions. These hard choices further reduce monthly expenditures by 26.3%. Additional restructuring may occur as the stabilization plan is implemented.

With these changes, we have **reduced our monthly expenditures by nearly one-third**. While incredibly difficult, these decisions put us in a more financially sustainable position.

### Leadership

The Executive Committee of the Board has made some decisions regarding the Center's leadership. I am happy to announce that our current Operations Manager, Andi Gunter, has accepted the role of Deputy Director. She will continue to lead Center staff in day-to-day operations. In addition to this change, in lieu of an interim or permanent Executive Director Search, the Board of Directors is currently considering a contract with a strategic consultant for the next 12 months. This will provide the expertise we need to stabilize the organization while we engage in a comprehensive search for the permanent Executive Director role, utilizing input from the diverse communities we serve. The consultant will be providing support for the following:

- Financial and fundraising planning
- Leadership coaching
- Board training
- Community relations support

### Transition Team

We are also forming a Transition Team. The strategic consultant will lead the Transition Team. The Team will be composed of individuals who represent our diverse community in identity and

skill set. The Transition Team will focus on immediate stabilization, the long-term strategic planning process, and the search for the next Executive Director of Oklahomans for Equality. We will share more information about the selection of the consultant and provide opportunities for our members to meet this individual in the near future.

#### Engagement and Communication

Additionally, we approved a Community Relations Committee at our April Board meeting to be chaired by our Board Secretary, Yonah Sienna Jasper. This committee will focus on uplifting community voices through listening sessions, town halls, and other engagement mechanisms. They will work closely with our Communications Committee to ensure we are relaying updates back to our members with what changes are occurring based on feedback from the community. We understand many difficult conversations lie ahead, but we are prepared to have them and know that we must in order to move forward and survive as an organization.

Whether you have been involved with the Center for decades, have only watched from afar, or anything in between, your voice is critical in shaping what the next phase for OkEq looks like. As president, I am committing to a monthly president's letter to keep our community informed of changes, progress, and opportunities to provide input. I am thankful there are so many individuals who want to see a thriving 2SLGBTQIA+ community in Oklahoma.

Sincerely,  
Whitney Cipolla