



CITY OF
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OREGON**

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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City of Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights Hires New Director

Dr. Markisha Smith brings educational, government and community experience to leadership role

Portland, OR – After an extensive search and interview process informed by input from community stakeholders, Commissioner Amanda Fritz is pleased to announce that Markisha Smith, Ed.D, will be the next Director of the City of Portland Office of Equity and Human Rights.

Dr. Smith comes to the City after serving as Director of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion for the Oregon Department of Education for the past five years. In that role, she provided leadership, guidance, professional learning, and support to school districts, various education partners, and community-based organizations on education equity throughout the state. A resident of Oregon since 2011, Dr. Smith served as professor at Warner Pacific College and Western Oregon University, and as an equity trainer and strategic consultant for Metro and the Camas, WA school district, among other local contracts. Dr. Smith also brings nationwide experience from working in Michigan, Texas, and other states, in addition to her focus on equity issues in Oregon.

The mission of the Office of Equity and Human Rights is to provide education and technical support to City staff and elected officials, leading to recognition and removal of systemic barriers to fair and just distribution of resources, access and opportunity, starting with issues of race and disability. As Director, Dr. Smith will initially lead a team of eleven staff and manage a 2018-19 budget of \$1.9 million.

“Dr. Markisha Smith brings the right combination of institutional, government and community-based equity work to her new role,” said Commissioner Amanda Fritz, Commissioner-in-Charge of the Office of Equity and Human Rights. “I am grateful to Interim Director Dr. Koffi Dessou for his work leading the bureau over the past year, and I am grateful he will continue to provide experienced senior leadership in the Office. I thank the 30 people, both City staff and community members, who participated in the interview process, as well as Mayor Wheeler and Commissioner Hardesty who interviewed the finalists and support this decision. I look forward to supporting Dr. Smith and bureau staff in advancing citywide equity goals in the months ahead.”

Dr. Smith said she is thrilled to continue her journey as an equity champion as Director of the Office of Equity and Human Rights. “There is an urgency to sustain equity work as an asset, through equitable outcomes, high expectations, meaningful engagement and consultation, and through honoring the rich and diverse experiences that have influenced the bureau’s creation and development over the past seven years. It is imperative that organizations examine systems of oppression in order to interrupt their power and influence on marginalized communities” she explains.

Dr. Smith will begin her new role on February 11, 2019.

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