

Weekly Legislative Update: Health

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March 20, 2020

Thank you to all of you who took action, followed important health related bills, and spoke with your legislators. Together we have made a difference.

New reproductive health laws, protecting pregnant persons right to access abortion, care after sexual assault, safe birthing with midwives and birth doulas, and contraception access.

Prescription drug costs will be monitored. The total cost of insulin workgroup and the drug affordability board have been established.

The lobby team had a new lead in 2022, and new issue chairs. Thanks to Susan Fleming and Cynthia Stewart for their leadership.

Did you know? The LWVWA Health Care Affinity Group is still active, during the legislative session monthly updates have been sent by email. We will meet virtually again beginning Saturday, April 9 at 12:30 to 2:30 pm. Contact Kim Abbey at kabbey@lwwwa.org if you wish to join the group.

Priority House Bills Passed the Senate:

[HB 1616](#) Concerning the charity care act. Sponsor: Tarra Simmons

Establishes minimum charity care requirements for hospitals such that patients below 300 percent of the federal poverty level (FPL) receive coverage for the full amount of their charges, patients from 301 percent up to 350 percent of the FPL receive coverage for 75 percent of their charges, and patients from 351 percent up to 400 percent of the FPL receive coverage for 50 percent of their charges. It also expands the application of hospital charity care requirements to include clinics affiliated with a hospital.

Was passed on the House floor on February 2. Passed in the Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care on February 23. Passed in the Senate Committee on Ways & Means on February 28.

PASSED on a floor vote on March 4.

[HB 1651](#) Allowing providers to bill separately for immediate postpartum contraception.

Sponsor: Rep. Thai. Requires health plans to allow providers to bill separately for devices or professional services associated with immediate postpartum contraception. Passed the House on January 26.

PASSED on a floor vote in the Senate on March 3.

[HB 1866](#) Assisting persons receiving community support services through medical assistance programs to receive supportive housing. Sponsor: Rep. Frank Chopp

It is the intent of the legislature to treat chronic homelessness as a medical condition and that the Apple Health address the needs of chronically homeless populations by pairing a health care problem with a health care solution.

Passed in the House on a floor vote on February 13. Passed by the Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care on February 23. Passed in the Senate Committee on Ways & Means on February 28.

PASSED the Senate on a floor vote on March 3.

[HB 1860](#) Preventing homelessness among persons discharging from inpatient behavioral health settings. Sponsor: Rep. Lauren Davis. By October 1, 2022, the Health Care Authority shall require that any contract with a managed care organization include a requirement to provide housing-related care coordination services to enrollees who are being discharged from inpatient behavioral health settings.

Was passed in the House on a floor vote February 16. Passed by the Senate Committee on Behavioral Health Subcommittee to Health & Long Term Care on February 24.

Passed in the Senate Committee on Ways & Means on February 28.

PASSED the Senate on a floor vote on March 3.

[HB 1851](#) Preserving a pregnant individual's ability to access abortion care. Sponsor: Rep. Thai Grants specific authorization for physician assistants, advanced registered nurse practitioners, acting within their scopes of practice to perform abortions. Prohibits the state from taking action against an individual based on pregnancy outcomes or for assisting a pregnant individual in exercising the right to reproductive freedom.

Passed on a House floor vote on February 11. Passed with a 7 to 5 vote in the Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care on February 23.

PASSED on the Senate floor on March 1.

[HB 1881](#) Creating a new health profession for birth doulas. Sponsor: Rep. Harris-Talley.

A new credentialed health profession is created for birth doulas. A birth doula may voluntarily apply for certification from the Department of Health.

Was passed in the House on a floor vote on February 9. Passed with an 8 to 4 vote in the Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care on Feb. 23.

PASSED on the Senate floor on March 1.

[HB 1646](#) Continuing the work of the dementia action collaborative. Sponsor: Rep. Jessica Bateman. In January 2016, Washington state released a State Plan to Address Alzheimer's

Disease and Other Dementias. The State Plan identifies goals, strategies, and recommendations as a blueprint for action. This bill reestablishes the formal dementia action collaborative to update the state plan and make recommendations. Passed on a House floor vote on January 26. Passed in the Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care on February 18.

PASSED by the Senate on a floor vote on February 25.

[HB 1622](#) Increasing the availability of sexual assault nurse examiners. Sponsor: Rep. Gina Mosbrucker. The Washington State University college of nursing shall establish a program to increase the availability of qualified sexual assault nurse examiners in eastern Washington. The program will develop and train lead sexual assault nurse examiners.

Was passed on a House floor vote on January 26. Passed in the Senate Committee on Higher Education & Workforce Development on February 24. Currently on the Senate floor.

PASSED the Senate on a floor vote on March 3.

Priority Senate Bills Passed the House

[SB 5532](#) Establishing a prescription drug affordability board. Sponsor: Sen. Karen Keiser. The prescription Drug Affordability board is established, to include five members who have expertise in health care economics or clinical medicine appointed by the governor. Board members shall serve for a term of five years. The board must coordinate and collaborate with the Health Care Authority, other boards, work groups, and commissions related to prescription drug costs and emerging therapies including the Health Care Cost Transparency board and the Universal Health Care commission. The board may choose to conduct an affordability review of any prescription drug with excessive price rises in a 12-month period. The board must establish a methodology for setting upper payment limits for prescription drugs.

Passed in the Senate on a floor vote on February 10. Passed in the House Committee on Health Care & Wellness on February 23. Passed in the House Committee on Appropriations on February 28.

PASSED on the House in a floor vote on March 2.

[SB 5589](#) Concerning statewide spending on primary care. Sponsor: Sen. June Robinson. The board of health shall submit a preliminary report to the governor and relevant committees of the legislature addressing primary care expenditures in Washington. The report must include the annual progress needed for primary care expenditures to reach 12 percent of total health care expenditures in a reasonable amount of time, and methods to incentivize the achievement of desired levels of primary care expenditures.

Passed in the Senate on a floor vote on February 8. Passed in the House Committee on Health Care & Wellness on Wednesday, February 23. Passed in the House Committee on Appropriations on Friday, February 28.

PASSED the House on a floor vote on March 3.

SB 5546 Concerning insulin affordability. Sponsor: Sen. Karen Keiser

The total cost of insulin work group is established. The work group membership must consist of twenty members appointed by the governor, to include representatives of pharmacists, health insurance carriers, patients, pharmacy benefit managers, and others. The work group must review and design strategies to reduce the cost of and total expenditures on insulin in this state. By December 1, 2022, the work group must submit a preliminary report detailing strategies to reduce the cost of and total expenditures on insulin. The insurance commissioner or designee a methodology for setting upper payment limits for prescription drugs. Passed on a Senate floor vote on February 8. Passed in the House Committee on Health and Wellness on February 23.

PASSED on a floor vote in the House on February 26. President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House signed on March 1. On the Governor's desk.

SB 5765 Concerning the practice of midwifery. Sponsor Senator Randall. Establishes a limited prescriptive license extension and a license extension to include medical devices and implants for licensed midwives.

Passed in the Senate on a floor vote on February 14. Passed with a 9 to 6 vote by the House Committee on Health Care & Wellness on Wednesday, February 23.

PASSED on a floor vote in the House on March 3.

SB 5518 Concerning the occupational therapy licensure compact. Sponsor: Sen. Muzzall. The purpose of this compact is to facilitate interstate practice of occupational therapy with the goal of improving public access to occupational therapy services, primarily in rural areas. The compact member states will create and establish a joint public agency known as the occupational therapy compact commission. This bill, if passed, will allow OTs and COTAs (Certified Assistants) to work in other states under their home state license.

Was passed on the Senate floor on February 2. Passed in the House Health Care & Wellness Committee on February 23. Passed on the Senate floor on March 2.

PASSED on a floor vote in the House on March 2. President of the Senate has signed.

Issues We are Watching

- 1) The Universal Health Care Commission was established by law in July 2021. The LWVWA has joined the Health Care is a Human Right WA coalition who are monitoring the work of the Commission. Visit <http://healthcareisarithwa.org/> to learn more about HCHR-WA. Visit <https://www.hca.wa.gov/about-hca/universal-health-care-commission> to learn more. **The next meeting is April 14, 2022 at 2:00 PM- 4:00 PM** and you may register to receive announcements, view recordings of past meetings and view the

comments from the Zoom chat, or sign up to give testimony at the beginning of each Commission meeting

- 2) Whole Washington <https://wholewashington.org/> is another action group working toward state-based universal health care. The goals of Whole Washington align with the LWVWA policy statements on Health Care. Preparing for an Initiative to the Legislature, seeking volunteers for signature gathering captains beginning April 2022. Learn more and volunteer. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnBoDWytUOA> for more information.

Bills We Support that did not move by the cut-off

[HB 1141](#) Increasing access to the death with dignity act. Sponsor: Rep. Skyler Rude
Makes changes to the 2009 Death with Dignity Act, mainly changes ‘physician’ to ‘qualified medical provider.’ Hospice care is increasingly provided by advanced registered nurse practitioners and physician assistants, especially in rural areas. Eliminates the 15-day waiting period and reduces it to 72 hours. Read more at <https://endoflifewa.org/>

[HB 1854](#) Requiring coverage for hearing instruments. Sponsor: Rep. Emily Wicks. A health carrier offering a health plan issued or renewed on or after January 1, 2023, must include coverage for hearing instruments. The maximum benefit amount required by this section is \$2,500 per ear with hearing loss every 36 months

[SB 5688](#) Concerning material changes to the operations and governance structure of participants in the health care marketplace. Sponsor: Sen. Emily Randall
Health entity mergers, acquisitions, and contracting affiliations must improve rather than harm access to affordable quality health care. The attorney general has authority to determine the effect of an acquisition or merger on access to care. The parties to the transaction shall submit written notice to the attorney general of such acquisition or merger four months prior to the merger. The impact statement must have an assessment of the effect of the acquisition on emergency services, reproductive health care services, end-of-life health care services, and gender affirming health care services and charity care.

[HB 1885](#) Implementing recommendations A and C from the 2021 dental therapy task force final report to establish the profession of dental therapy statewide. Sponsor: Rep. Eileen Cody. It is the legislature's intent that dental therapists will meet the needs of local communities as they work under the direction of a licensed Washington dentist. The legislature intends for dental therapists to be incorporated into the dental care workforce and used to effectively treat more patients. This new Dental Therapist bill is based on the work of the Dental Therapist Task Force established in 2021. The LWVWA has joined the WA Dental Access Coalition. Read more at [here](#).

How You Can Be Involved

- During the legislative session we will send Action Alerts. Please respond to these, which will direct you to an application to facilitate communicating with your legislators on an important vote in committees or on the chamber floor.
- Local Leagues in Washington have action chairs who coordinate action teams. Some local Leagues have education teams to take action locally. Contact your local League action chair to find out and join.
- You may also express your opinion on legislation with the LWVWA issue chairs. We will take your perspectives under considerations as we determine our support for legislation and prepare testimony. Kim Abbey, Healthcare Issue Chair, kabbey@lwvwa.org