

Weekly Legislative Update: Health

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January 30, 2020

Priority Bills Needing Action This Week

It will be very helpful for you to know what legislative committees that your own three legislators sit on. **If your own representatives sit on House Health and Wellness committee, you have an opportunity to take action.** Likewise, **if your own senator sits on Senate Health and Long-Term Care committee, take action on the bills listed this week.** When you review these bills always look to see if your own legislator is a co-sponsor and write an email to thank them.

[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.

Scheduled for public hearing in the House Committee on Health Care & Wellness on Wednesday, February 2, 2022 at 8:00 AM.

⚠️ **Sign in PRO [here](#).** You may provide written testimony also.

[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.

Passed in the House Health and Wellness committee on January 19, 2022 and will soon be scheduled on the floor for a vote.

⚠️ **HB 1616 is on the House floor for a vote as of January 25th. Contact your own two representatives to ask that they vote yes on HB 1616.**

[HB 1610](#) Concerning the occupational therapy licensure compact. Sponsor: Rep. Jessica Bateman. 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. Scheduled for a first public hearing in the House Committee on Health Care & Wellness on Monday, January 31, 2022 at 1:30 PM.

⚠️ **Please sign in PRO [here](#).** You may provide written testimony also.

[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/>
This bill passed in the House in 2021. In 2022 HB 1141 began in the House again. It passed the House on January 12 and was referred to the Senate, where it is now in the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee.

⚠️ Please contact Sen. [Annette Cleveland](#), chair, or Sen. [David Frockt](#), vice-chair, to **ask them to schedule HB 1141 for a public hearing** in Senate Health and Long Term Care committee.

[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. This bill had a public hearing in the Senate Law and Justice committee on January 18, 2022. That committee must schedule an executive session for a vote before February 3 in order to move on.

⚠️ Please contact [Sen. Manka Dhingra](#) chair, or [Sen. Yasmin Trudeau](#), vice-chair, to **ask them to schedule SB 5688 for executive action** in Senate Law & Justice Committee before the February 3 cut-off. And take action on the Action Alert today to send a message to the entire Senate Law and Justice committee.

Bills We Support

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[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.

[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.

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[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.

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 the insurance commissioner or designee and 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.

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.

Executive action taken in Senate Health and Long-Term Care committee on January 26, 2022. Currently in Senate Rules committee awaiting a second hearing.

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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 <https://www.wadentalaccess.com/blog/2021/12/22/task-force-report-shows-clear-support-for-dental-therapy-expansion>.

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.

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.

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://healthcareisarightwa.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 February 25, 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 beginning April 2022. Learn more and volunteer. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BnBoDWytUOA> for more information.

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

