

Weekly Legislative Update: Health

Issue Team Chair: Kim Abbey
Contact: kabbey@lwwa.org

February 6, 2020

Last Thursday, February 3rd, was the cut-off for bills to move from the chamber of origin to the opposite chamber. Three healthcare bills did not make the cut: HB 1854, the hearing aid bill; HB 1885, the dental therapist bill; and SB 5688, the hospital merger bill. Those three bills will most likely be back in 2023 for the new biennium and that means that they will be renumbered next year. This coming Tuesday, February 7th, is the fiscal committee cut-off. **It is essential that you know if your representatives sit on the House Appropriations committee. And if your Senator sits on Senate Ways and Means committee.**

Priority Bills Needing Action This Week

[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/> Was passed on the House floor on January 12th.

⚠️ You may take action if you vote in these LDs by writing or phoning your senators who are on the [Senate Health and Long-Term Care](#) committee: LDs 4, 6, 10, 18, 24, 26, 29, 33, 38, 42, 46, or 49. Ask them to schedule HB 1141 for a public hearing. Write to your own representatives who are [HB 1141 sponsors](#) to thank them.

[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.

⚠️ Write to your own representatives who are [HB 1616 sponsors](#) to thank them. It will be assigned to a Senate committee during the coming week.

[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 26th.

⚠️ You may take action if you vote in these LDs by writing or phoning your senators who are on the [Senate Higher Education and Workforce Development committee](#): 6, 21, 26, 28, 42. Ask them to schedule HB 1622 for a public hearing. Write to your own representatives who are [HB 1622 sponsors](#) to thank them.

[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 2nd.

⚠️ Write to your own senator who is a SB 5218 sponsor to thank them. It will be assigned to a House committee during the coming week.

[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.
Was passed on a House floor vote on January 26th.

⚠️ You may take action if you vote in these LDs by writing or phoning your senators who are on the [Senate Health and Long-Term Care](#) committee: LDs 4, 6, 10, 18, 24, 26, 29, 33, 38, 42, 46. 49. Ask them to schedule HB 1646 for a public hearing. Write to your own representatives who are [HB 1646 sponsors](#) to thank them.

[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.
Was passed in the Senate Health and Long Term Care on January 28, 2022.
Referred to Senate Ways and Means and was heard on Saturday, February 5th.

[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.

Was passed in the Senate Health and Long Term Care committee on January 24th. Must be pulled from Senate Rules committee to the Senate floor for a vote by the deadline of February 15th.

⚠️ If your own senator is on the [Senate Rules committee](#), write or phone them to express support for SB 5546. Thank your own senator if they are a [sponsor of SB 5546](#).

[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.

Was passed in the Senate Health and Long-Term Care committee on January 26, 2022. Must be pulled from Senate Rules committee to the Senate floor for a vote by the deadline of February 15th.

⚠️ If your own senator is on the [Senate Rules committee](#), write or phone them to express support for SB 5589. Thank your own senator if they are a [sponsor of SB 5589](#).

[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 Health and Wellness committee on January 26th. Referred to House Appropriations committee and was heard on Saturday, February 5th.

[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.

Was passed in the House Health and Wellness committee on February 2nd. Referred to House Appropriations committee and was heard on Saturday, February 5th.

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

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

Bills We Support

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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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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 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