

Session Wrap-Up: Health Care

Issue Team Chair: Jody Disney

Contact:

jdisney@lwvwa.org

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As of this writing, here is where things are for the bills we have supported this session. The most important thing you can do now is to thank legislators for what you're happy about. The Governor has yet to sign all bills passed to him, and it is possible he will veto a few! If there are bills you would like to see strengthened and refiled ask your representatives to do that in the next session. I know I have a few!

As always, the most effective influence we can have really is for many voices speaking for themselves rather than many voices speaking for the League. Remember to speak for yourself. The Issue Chairs will speak for the League. **Learn how to participate [HERE](#).** Email your legislators or call them. **Get their emails here:** [Washington State Legislature](#).

These bills have finally passed after years of dedicated League lobbying:

[ESHB 1222](#) Requiring coverage for hearing Instruments. Sponsored by Representative Orwall and sixteen others. The final bill report [HERE](#) requires large health insurance plans as well as plans for public employees to pay for hearing instruments and an initial evaluation from an audiologist. This benefit now matches that of Medicaid beneficiaries.

[ESHB 1678](#) Establishing and authorizing the profession of dental therapy. This bill will define the profession of dental therapy and how it will fit within the dental team but allows it only to exist within federally qualified health centers. This is a bill long supported by the League as it promises to improve access to dental care for underserved pockets of the broader community by approving funding for more training programs while initially limiting their practice to FQHCs. This plan will allow for a statewide approach and more opportunity for evaluation. Read the final bill analysis [HERE](#).

[ESSB 5179](#) Increasing access to the provisions of the Death with Dignity Act or Medical Aid in Dying. This is a companion bill to HB 1281 which was introduced in the house and has been championed by Rep. Skylar Rude for many years. This senate bill sponsored by Senator Pederson and many others has faced stiff opposition principally due to religious beliefs. The

League has supported this bill for over a decade. It gives much broader access to choices in end-of-life decisions statewide by allowing for Nurse Practitioners and Physician Assistants to sign the required consents as one of the required signers, medications to be mailed to the individuals homes, and thirdly, shortens the waiting time to implement the individual's wishes. Read the final analysis [HERE](#).

Reproductive Healthcare has been further Protected.

[ESHB 1155](#) Addressing the collection, sharing, and selling of consumer health data.

Establishes consumer rights regarding health data; defines obligations of regulated entities that collect, process, share, and sell consumer health data. Prohibits selling consumer health data without a valid authorization. Prohibits implementing a geofence to track or collect data from consumers who enter certain health care entities. **This bill faced stiff opposition but with concerted efforts by all groups concerned, it passed in its original form.** Read the final bill report [HERE](#).

[SB 5242](#) Prohibits cost sharing for abortion. Sponsored by Senator Cleveland and sixteen others. After January 1, 2024, health plan carriers including those for public employees must offer an abortion benefit without cost sharing for pregnancy. Plans may be given an exemption however, based on religious objections. Read the final report [HERE](#).

[ESHB 1340](#) Concerning actions by health professional disciplining authorities against applicants and license holders for providing reproductive or gender affirming care. This bill essentially protects health care providers in Washington from other state laws from discipline related to providing healthcare procedures which are legal in Washington. Sponsored by Rep. Riccelli. Read the final bill report [HERE](#).

[ESHB 1469](#) Concerning access to reproductive services and gender affirming treatment in Washington state. Sponsored by Representatives Hansen and Thai. This is a companion bill to SB 5489. This complex bill requested by the Attorney General provides a mechanism for that office to prosecute any entity attempting to interfere with any person suing anyone in the provision of protected legally approved professionally offered reproductive services which have been provided in Washington state. Read the bill report [HERE](#).

[SB 5768](#) Protecting access to abortions medications. Just introduced after being requested by Governor Inslee. The bill is sponsored by Senator Keiser in the Ways & Means Committee. The bill authorizes the department of corrections (DOC) to acquire, sell, deliver, distribute, and dispense abortion medications under its own license. **The bill has passed and is on the Governor's desk. Read the bill report [HERE](#)**

Workforce and healthcare system improvements:

E2SSB 5236 Concerning hospital staffing standards. Sponsored by Sen. Robinson and fourteen others. Relating to improving nurse and health care worker safety and patient care by establishing minimum staffing standards in hospitals, requiring hospital staffing committees to develop staffing plans, addressing mandatory overtime and meal and rest breaks, and providing for enforcement.

E2SSB 5278 Implementing audit recommendations to reduce barriers to home care aide certification. Sponsored by Sen. L. Wilson and eight others. Requires the departments of Health and Social and Health Services to address delays between training and testing, the lack of test sites, and performance and contract management processes, and submitting a report to the Governor and Legislature no later than June 30, 2024.

SB 5454 Concerning industrial insurance coverage for posttraumatic stress disorders affecting registered nurses. Sponsored by Sen. Cleveland and eleven others. Provides industrial insurance coverage for posttraumatic stress disorders affecting registered nurses. **It has passed and the Governor has signed.**

SSB 5499 Concerning the multistate nursing licensure compact. A bill sponsored by Senator Mullet and six others would seek changes in existing law to allow Washington state to cooperate with other states so that Registered Nurses with a Washington license or a nurse from another state with agreed to regulations might work in another state and vice versa. Compacts exist in 29 other states and make relocating for nurses and recruiting for hospitals more possible.

E2SSB 5582 Reducing barriers and expanding educational opportunities to increase the supply of nurses in Washington. Sponsored by Sen. Holy and twenty others. Requires the state board for community and technical colleges to develop a plan to increase credential opportunities in nursing. Creates nursing education opportunities at community and technical colleges and within the Department of Veterans Affairs. Modifies program approval and training requirements under the Nursing Care Quality Assurance Commission. Will create the High School Student Certified Nursing Assistant Pilot Program.

SB 5036 Concerning telemedicine. This is a companion bill to HB 1027. Sponsored by Senator Muzzall. Extending the Telemedicine time frame option (until 01/2017) in which real-time telemedicine using both audio and video technology may be used. This bill has important consequences for the underserved, frail, and elderly especially in rural communities.

2SSB 5103 Concerning payment to acute care hospitals for difficult to discharge Medicaid

patients. Patients in hospitals in small communities are waiting to be discharged to other placement such as a nursing home bed. This bill will protect these hospitals which smaller and rural communities cannot afford to lose. Sponsored by Senator Muzzall. There was a comprehensive work session, and the bill will provide inpatient levels of reimbursement if the patient meets the guidelines for difficult to discharge.

What we have yet to finish:

SB 5241 Concerning material changes to the materials and operation structure of participants in the healthcare marketplace (previously Keep Our Care Act (KOCA)).

Sponsored by Senator Randall and sixteen others, this bill seeks to limit mergers and acquisitions of hospitals and healthcare facilities. Passage gives the Attorney General further legal grounds to investigate and intervene in cases where takeover of a secular healthcare facility limits choice in personal healthcare decision making. This is particularly of concern in end of life, gender affirming care and the whole of reproductive healthcare. **This bill made it through to Ways & Means where it died.**

SJM 8006 Requesting that the Federal Government create a Universal Health Care Program.

This bill sponsored by Senator Hasegawa, Cleveland, Billig, Kuderer, Lovelett, Nugyen, Shewmake, Stanford, Valdez, and Wilson, C. is a joint memorial to the Federal Government which requests the Government to create a single payor Universal Healthcare program and if it will not or cannot the Government should provide Washington State with the necessary waivers allowing the State to develop, define, and fund our own. It is a statement to Washington DC that we the people of Washington want Universal Healthcare funded by a single payor system separate from employment.

SJR 8202 Senate Joint Resolution. Amending the State Constitution to address reproductive freedom. This resolution will require passage by two-thirds of the membership in both the House and Senate and if passed will be voted on by the voters in the next general election. Sponsored by Senators Keiser and Kuderer and fourteen others. This bill had a public hearing in Senate Health & Long-term Care Committee on 1/24/23 at 8am and was heard in Executive Session on 1/31/23 and received a Do Pass recommendation but did not pass out of Rules.

How You Can Be Involved

- Local Leagues in Washington have action chairs who coordinate action teams. Some local Leagues have health care committees or individuals with a healthcare interest to work with so you can take action locally. Contact your local League action chair to find out, join, and get active.
- Please work with LWVWA Healthcare Issue Chairs and become involved with our Healthcare Affinity group. We welcome your perspectives as we determine our support

for legislation and prepare testimony for the session. Contact us to be added to the Healthcare Affinity Group membership. We can make a difference if we act together!

- Contact me: jodydisney@LWVWA.org or kimabbey@gmail.org