

Weekly Legislative Update: Health Care

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This was the second week of the 2023 Legislative Session. Committees were busy holding public hearings on the bills that had been introduced. Four more bills supported by LWVWA passed in their committees: **HB 1021**, Aligning social worker licensing requirements, **HB 1027**, Concerning telemedicine, **HB 1134**, Implementing the 988 behavioral health crisis response and suicide prevention system, and **SB 5130** Concerning assisted outpatient treatment.

Additional behavioral health bills were introduced, **SB 5422**, Providing access to behavioral health services to children using licensed clinicians co-located within the school and **SB 5506** Establishing an enhanced behavior support homes model.

Bills Needing Action This Week

Please read Bills We Support to see the latest status of other bills.

Sign in “Pro” for the following bills this week:

You may express support for bills in hearings with the online process. Remember, only authorized members can speak for the League; the Issue Chairs will do that, so please leave the “Organization” box blank. A more powerful influence is many voices speaking for themselves rather than many voices speaking for the League.

Thankyou for signing on Pro to the bills last week. Additional bills are scheduled for a public hearing this week.

HB 1155 Addressing the collection, sharing, and selling of consumer health data. This bill closes gaps in privacy protections for healthcare data. Privacy is particularly important in regard to certain sensitive healthcare data such as reproductive health care, gender-affirming care, and behavioral health diagnoses.

Scheduled for a public hearing in the House Committee on Civil Rights & Judiciary on Tuesday, **January 24, 2023 at 10:30 AM. Please sign in [here](#) as Pro no later than 9:30 am on January 24th.**

SB 5506 Establishing an enhanced behavior support homes model. This bill establishes an enhanced behavior support homes program. This program would provide intensive behavioral services and support so that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who also have challenging behaviors that cannot be safely managed in the typical supported housing situation, could live in a community setting rather than being institutionalized.

Scheduled for a public hearing in the Senate Committee on Human Services on Wednesday, **January 25, 2023 at 6:00 PM. Please sign in [here](#) as Pro no later than 5:00 pm on January 25th.**

Email your Legislators to support these bills:

Use the tab for “Comment on this Bill” at the bill link to email to any/all of your legislators, letting them know these bills are important to their constituents. HB (“House Bill”) to Representatives, SB (“Senate Bill”) to your Senator.

Bills We Support

HB 1021/SB 5354 Aligning social worker licensing requirements. This bill would change (lessen) the number of hours of supervision required for licensure for social workers, marriage and family counselors, and mental health counselors to align with national standards, thus facilitating licensure in Washington State for persons licensed in other states. This change is particularly important for military spouses.

HB 1021 unanimously passed the House Committee on Postsecondary Education & Workforce.

HB 1027/SB 5036 Concerning telemedicine. These are companion bills. They extend the time frame (until 07/2024) in which real-time telemedicine, using audio or audio-video technology may be used. Telemedicine has provided increased access to medical and behavioral health services during the pandemic. These bills would extend these benefits.

HB 1027 unanimously passed the House Committee on Health Care & Wellness and was referred to the House Rules Committee for review. SB 5036 unanimously passed the Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care and was referred to Senate Rules Committee for a second reading.

HB 1041 Authorizing the prescriptive authority of psychologists. This bill would authorize specially trained psychologists to prescribe medication, thus adding additional prescribing providers to the behavioral health workforce. There are five other states where psychologists are allowed to prescribe.

The bill had a public hearing in the House Committee on Health Care & Wellness.

HB 1134 Implementing the 988 behavioral health crisis response and suicide prevention system. This bill has several provisions regarding the 988 crisis hotline, mostly changes and enhancements due things learned during the initial implementation. It extends several dates related to reporting, and funding of the crisis call centers; establishes liability protection for activities related to the dispatching decisions of 988 crisis hotline staff, directs the Department of Health to develop informational materials and a social media campaign to promote the 988 crisis hotline, directs the University of Washington to establish a crisis training and secondary trauma program for personnel in the behavioral health crisis system, and establishes mobile rapid response crisis teams to respond to the 988 calls when needed.

The bill had a public hearing in the House Committee on Health Care & Wellness.

HB 1155/SB 5351 Addressing the collection, sharing, and selling of consumer health data (aka, Washington, My Health, My Data Act). These are companion bills. Generally, people assume that their healthcare information is private and this privacy is protected by a federal law, HIPAA. However, health data collected by certain apps and websites is not covered. This bill closes these gaps in privacy protections for healthcare data. Privacy is particularly important in regard to certain sensitive

healthcare data such as reproductive health care, gender-affirming care, and behavioral health diagnoses. Exposure of an individual's healthcare information could have negative consequences, and concerns about exposure might hinder someone from seeking health information or care.

HB 1155. See Bills Needing Action This Week

HB 1168 Providing prevention services, diagnoses, treatment, and support for prenatal substance exposure. This bill would provide for increased access to services for children with fetal alcohol spectrum disorders and other prenatal substance disorders, as well as increasing prevention efforts.

The bill had a public hearing in the House Committee on Health Care & Wellness.

SB 5095 Concerning the "parks Rx" health and wellness pilot programs. The bill establishes a minimum of three 2-year pilot programs that will incentivize residents, particularly those from communities experiencing inequities or without ready access to physical fitness facilities, to regularly use public parks and recreation sites in order to enable better physical and mental health outcomes, and decrease visits to hospitals and clinics. The effectiveness of the pilot programs would be evaluated.

The bill had a public hearing in the Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care.

SB 5120 Establishing 23-hour crisis relief centers in Washington state. This bill provides for the establishment of 23-hour crisis relief centers. These are community-based facilities open 24-7, offering access to brief (<24 hours) care for persons experiencing a mental health or substance use crisis. They would accept walk-ins and drop-offs from ambulance, fire, and police.

The bill had a public hearing in the Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care.

SB 5130 Concerning assisted outpatient treatment. When deemed appropriate, this bill provides for a less restrictive mental health treatment option than inpatient hospitalization for persons who have been involuntarily committed.

The bill passed the Senate Committee on Law & Justice (10 Pass votes, 1 Refer Without Recommendation vote). It was referred to the Senate Rules Committee for a second reading.

SB 5189 Establishing behavioral health support specialists. This bill establishes the profession of behavioral health support specialist. After completing a clinical training program, including a practicum, this person would be certified to deliver brief, evidence-based behavioral interventions under the supervision of licensed behavioral health provider. This would increase access to behavioral health services and ease workforce shortages.

The bill had a public hearing in the Senate Committee on Health & Long Term Care.

SB 5422 Providing access to behavioral health services to children using licensed clinicians co-located within the school. This bill requires that managed care organizations reimburse a behavioral health agency for providing medically necessary behavioral health services in a school setting to students in that school who are enrolled in a Medicaid program. Allowing for reimbursement for services provided in a school setting would allow more children who need services to access them.. It would eliminate many barriers to treatment due to time, distance, or transportation.

SB 5506 Establishing an enhanced behavior support homes model. This bill establishes an enhanced behavior support homes program. This program would provide intensive behavioral services and support so that individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities who also have challenging behaviors that cannot be safely managed in the typical supported housing situation, could live in a community setting rather than being institutionalized.

See Bills Needing Action This Week

How You Can Be Involved

- Local Leagues in Washington have action chairs who coordinate action teams. Some local Leagues have health care 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 into consideration as we determine our support for legislation and prepare testimony. Mary Lynne Courtney, Behavioral Health Issue Chair, mlcourtney@lwvwa.org.
- Another way to be involved is to join the Healthcare Affinity Group meetings on Zoom. The group meets every six weeks during the legislative session. If you are interested, please email Kim Abbey at kabbey48@gmail.com for the date of the next meeting and a link.