

# Capitol News

## March 16, 2019

### Melissa Johnson, WSLHA Lobbyist

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At this more-than-halfway-point in the legislative session, almost 700 bills are still alive between the House and Senate. Lawmakers reached the “house of origin” cutoff last Wednesday, and have returned to their committee hearing schedules. The next deadline for legislators is on April 3<sup>rd</sup>, when bills must pass the opposite house’s policy committees.

More good news on **SB 5887**, our bill clarifying that patients are allowed up to **six visits before a health care benefit manager can impose prior authorization**. It has been scheduled for a hearing in the House Health Care & Wellness Committee on Friday. WSLHA will be signing in support of this bill.

Also this week, the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee will hold a **work session on health benefit managers**. Even though SB 5601 did not pass this committee this session, this work session will allow for additional discussion on the issue of regulating health benefit managers.

The **music therapy bill, SB 5485**, will be heard in the House Health Care Committee on Wednesday. WSLHA has concerns that the bill will allow music therapists to treat communication disorders.

The House Health Care Committee will also hear the **Bluetooth and telecoil technology notification bill, SB 5210**, on Wednesday. Audiologists have raised concerns that naming specific technologies in law is not appropriate and that audiologists should be able to decide what is best for their patients.

I reported last week on **HB 2012, the national certification bonus bill for educational staff associates (ESAs)**. Legislators had indicated that they would amend the bill to require a study of the national certification bonus issue. Unfortunately, the House did not bring this bill up for a vote, even in this amended form. But PTWA is working with WEA on ways to study this issue during the interim, despite the fact that the bill died.

Budget writers are putting their final touches on the House and Senate budgets, with this week’s revenue forecast being the last piece of the budget puzzle. The forecast, being released on Wednesday, will show legislators what the state’s economic picture will look like in the coming years. We expect the House and Senate budgets to be released the week of March 25<sup>th</sup>.