

Capitol News Special Session Report

January 18, 2018

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The 2018 60-day legislative session got off to a fast and furious start last week. Already, hundreds of bills have been introduced, with committees getting back to business hearing bills and holding work sessions. Governor Inslee gave his "state of the state" address on Tuesday, highlighting Washington's strong economy. He also outlined several legislative priorities, including funding the final step of the McCleary K-12 decision, approving the Capital Budget, and tackling carbon emissions.

We have early momentum for WSLHA's insurance prior-authorization legislation! The bill number is SB 6157 (this is the bill that increases to 12 the number of visits allowed before prior authorization is imposed). It's not scheduled for a hearing yet, but we have bipartisan support for the bill. We should have a House bill number this week.

Another bill of interest introduced last week is HB 2591. This bill would allow Labor & Industries (LNI) to replace hearing aids for worker's compensation patients after 5 years. Currently, LNI is restricting the replacement of hearing aids and is requiring repairs instead of replacement. This bill will be heard on Monday.

Finally, we would like to discuss last session's "years of service" bills (HB 1374 and SB 5283), which would allow non-school work experience to be included in calculating the salary as a school SLP and school audiologist...technically, these bills are still alive this session. However, last session HB 2242 passed the Legislature and was signed into law. Among its provisions, HB 2242 eliminated the salary allocation model and directed the years of service issue be bargained at the local level. This makes HB 1374 and SB 5283 moot, and they will not be considered this session.