

Capitol News

March 27, 2017

Melissa Johnson, WSLHA Lobbyist

This week was all about the Senate budget. In a whirlwind of activity, the Senate budget was released and heard on Tuesday, voted out of the Senate Ways & Means Committee on Wednesday, and voted off the Senate floor late Thursday night. As expected, the Senate floor vote was along party line, 25-24.

General provisions in the Senate budget include the following:

- The Senate budget spends approximately \$43 billion in the 2017-19 biennium, representing a \$5 billion increase from 2015-17 spending levels.
- K-12 education, mental health, and higher education are the larger policy level increases in the Senate budget.
- Budget reductions include cuts to TANF, the elimination of the Housing and Essential Needs Program, and other social service reductions.
- The Senate budget rejects the collective bargaining agreements that have been reached between the Governor and collective bargaining units. Instead, funding is provided for a \$500 annual wage increase beginning on July 1, 2017, and another \$500 beginning July 1, 2018, for all state agency employees, including those at institutions of higher education.

Here are the relevant provisions of the Senate budget for WSLHA:

- The Health Professions Loan Repayment Program received a \$3 million reduction (cutting available awards from 150 to 110).
- Funding is provided for access to autism services. This funding is to assist in navigating the health care system and is to be done with collaboration between the Health Care Authority and DSHS.
- Funding is provided to restore the adult hearing aid benefit in Medicaid beginning January 1, 2018.
- The State Auditor is directed to conduct a performance audit of the Department of Health (DOH) focused on the fee-setting for each health profession licensed by DOH.

Next week, the budget focus shifts to the House of Representatives. The House budget will be released on Monday, with a public hearing that day. A vote is scheduled in the Appropriations Committee on Tuesday, with a floor vote soon thereafter.

On Wednesday, the House Health Care Committee will hold a work session on prior authorization for rehabilitation services. Providers will be on this panel, describing the ongoing problems with prior authorization. Insurers will also be represented on the panel. There will also be a work session on cardiac and stroke system of care.

Wednesday also marks the policy committee cutoff deadline, when all Senate bills must be out of their House policy committees, and all House bills out of their Senate policy committees. Of course, bills necessary to implement the budget (NTIB) are exempt from this cutoff. The fiscal committee cutoff is Tuesday, April 4th. And all bills (except NTIB bills) must be out of their opposite house (Senate bills out

of the House; House bills out of the Senate) by Wednesday, April 12th. The session is scheduled to adjourn on Sunday, April 23rd. However, a special session(s) is likely.

This Week's Events

Health Care (Senate) - SHR 4, - 3/27 @ 10:00am

- SHB 1043 - Public Hearing - Addressing nonpublic personal health information.
- SHB 1314 - Public Hearing - Addressing health care authority auditing practices.

Human Services, Mental Health & Housing (Senate) - SHR 2, - 3/27 @ 1:30pm

- SHB 1477 - Exec Session - Concerning disclosure of health-related information with persons with a close relationship with a patient.

Higher Education (House) - HHR D, JLOB - 3/28 @ 8:00am

- HB 2143 - Exec Session - Expanding opportunities for higher education students.

Education (House) - HHR A, JLOB - 3/28 @ 1:30pm

- SB 5662 - Exec Session - Authorizing the superintendent of public instruction to designate a member of the professional educator standards board.

Higher Education (House) - HHR D, JLOB - 3/29 @ 1:30pm

- HB 2143 - Exec Session - Expanding opportunities for higher education students.

WSLHA High Priority Bills

Bill #	Abbrev. Title	Short Description	Status	Sponsor	Position
SHB 1059 (ESB 5023)	School levy lid revs./delay	Delaying implementation of revisions to the school levy lid.	C 6 L 17	Wellman	
ESHB 1843 (SB 5623)	Basic education program	Fulfilling the state's paramount duty for all children through equitable and responsible investments in the state's basic education program and reductions to local effort contributions.	S Ways & Means	Sullivan	
SB 5177	Hearing loss training	Requiring long-term care workers to be trained to recognize hearing loss.	H Rules R	Bailey	
SB 5179	Hearing instrument coverage	Requiring coverage for hearing instruments under public employee and Medicaid programs.	H Approps	Bailey	Support

<u>SB 5607</u>	Education	Concerning education.	H Approps	Braun	
<u>SB 5825</u>	K-12 education funding	Addressing the state's paramount duty to fully fund K-12 education by creating a new partnership between the state and local school districts.	S Ways & Means	Mullet	