

Capitol News

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WSLHA Priorities

Despite strong advocacy from WSLHA and our other coalition partners and a strong vote out of the House Health Care Committee, **our priority bill, [HB 1655](#), is dead.** It was not scheduled for a hearing in the House Appropriations Committee and therefore won't make it past Monday's fiscal cutoff deadline. Its companion bill, [SB 6161](#), had a strong hearing last week to educate Senate Health Care Committee members about the issue, but we knew there were no plans to vote the Senate bill out of committee.

With strong opposition from insurers and no available data on the cost to the state-funded insurance plans, legislators were not willing to move the bill. And a late controversy surrounding dental insurance plans did not help. **My thanks to our leadership team, our testifiers (the amazing Kendra Holloway and Kate Pilant!), our members who lobbied their legislators, and our members who signed in supporting HB 1655 and SB 6161 this session.** The more encouraging news is that we have a commitment from some insurers to work on this issue during the interim.

In school funding news, [HB 2180](#), the bill that increases the K-12 special education enrollment funding cap from 15% to 17.25%, passed the House Appropriations Committee and is now in the House Rules Committee. Its companion bill, [SB 6014](#), is not scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Ways & Means Committee and is likely dead.

Another school funding bill was just introduced over the weekend, [HB 2494](#). This bill increases funding to materials, supplies, and operating costs (MSOC) for school districts. This includes technology, curriculum, textbooks, library materials, facilities maintenance, and central office administration. It is scheduled for a hearing and a vote in the House Appropriations Committee on Monday.

Finally, a bill we had concerns about last session, [HB 1508](#), is back but in a much narrower form that removes APTA Washington's concerns. This bill seeks to address the cause of increased health care costs. Last session, it included civil fines for providers who exceed the health care cost growth benchmark, with exceptions for small providers. This session, it has been narrowed considerably, and no longer contains any penalties for providers. HB 1508 is eligible for a vote by the House.

General News

Wednesday's policy committee cutoff has come and gone and now attention turns to the fiscal committees. Bills with a financial impact to the state must now be heard and voted out of a

fiscal committee by Monday, February 5th. With this tight deadline, many bills will die in the fiscal committees.

The exception of course, are bills that are NTIB, or “necessary to implement the budget,” a designation the majority can place on bills that are tied to the budget. Bills that are NTIB live on until the end of the session regardless of whether they have passed the usual requisite hurdles.

After the February 5th fiscal committee cutoff, both chambers will turn their attention to floor debate. They will spend long days and nights voting to send bills to the opposite house by February 13th, the house of origin cutoff.

On Tuesday, Governor Jay Inslee issued an executive order to develop guidelines for how the state adopts generative artificial intelligence into its own systems to ensure its ethical and transparent use. WaTech, the agency operating the state’s technology and information security services, will work with the Governor’s cabinet agencies to submit a report identifying potential generative AI initiatives that could be implemented in state operations. The plan would develop initial guidelines for how the government may procure, use, and monitor the use of generative AI.

Upcoming Dates:

February 5 - Fiscal Committee Cutoff

February 13 - House of Origin Cutoff

February 21 - Opposite House Policy Committee Cutoff

February 26 - Opposite House Fiscal Committee Cutoff

March 1 - Floor Cutoff

March 7 - Last day of Regular Session