

Capitol News

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WSLHA Priorities

[HB 1222](#), legislation that **mandates large group insurance plan coverage** (employers with more than 50 employees) **for hearing instruments and the services necessary to fit them**, is still in the Rules Committee.

The Legislature is considering several bills dealing with **special education funding**.

- [HB 1436](#) is OSPI-request legislation. It is scheduled for a vote in the House Appropriations Committee on Monday. There is a [proposed substitute bill](#) that makes changes to the special education cost multipliers and requires the Joint Legislative Audit & Review Committee (JLARC) to conduct a performance audit of the state's special education system.
- [SB 5311](#) is Governor-request legislation. It **increases special education cost multipliers** over a 4-year period and increases the funding cap from 14.5% to 15%. It has not been scheduled for a vote yet in the Senate Ways & Means Committee.
- [HB 1109](#) increases the **reimbursement for initial evaluations and IEPs** during the summers of 2023, 2023, and 2025. It is scheduled for a vote in the Appropriations Committee on Monday. There are two proposed amendments: the first clarifies that the \$3000d for initial evaluations and IEP development are provided per student; the second puts a 'null and void clause' on the bill, making it null and void unless funded in the final operating budget.
- [HB 1305](#) makes several timeline changes to **requirements related to initial student evaluations for special education and to development and implementation of individualized education programs**. WSLHA has concerns that the increased timelines may not be achievable given the current caseloads of school-based providers. HB 1305 is scheduled for a hearing in the House Appropriations Committee on Wednesday and executive session on Friday. WSLHA continues to work with WEA on removing these shortened timeframes from the bill.

Provider Contract Increases. [HB 1655](#) is the bill requiring insurers to include an annual **increase in compensation** in their provider contracts that reflects increases in the Consumer Price Index. Despite support from many health care provider associations, including WSLHA, it did not pass the House Health Care Committee by last Friday's deadline and is dead for the session.

Medicaid reimbursement. [HB 1715](#) was heard last Wednesday in the House Health Care Committee. It establishes a pilot project to increase Medicaid payments to health care providers and facilities that serve a high number of Medicaid and Medicare enrollees in rural areas or areas with a high concentration of underserved individuals. This bill did not pass out of committee before last Friday's cutoff.

General News

The legislative session is now more than one third complete and this week marked the first culling of bills, the house of origin policy committee cutoff. Bills that have failed to pass this cutoff are considered dead for the session. Of course, no concept is really dead until the end of the biennium, as parts can be resurrected in various ways or reintroduced next year. Cutoff dates do play a significant role in the annual legislative process to limit the number of bills that move through the process. This year, members of the House introduced 846 bills and members of the Senate introduced 767.

This week, the bills that passed the policy committees and will impact the state financially must also pass through a fiscal committee (Appropriations, Capital Budget, Finance, Transportation, and Ways & Means) by February 24th. Bills that are designated "necessary to implement the budget" or NTIB, are exempt from the cutoff calendar. Bills that have passed out of the policy committee but have no fiscal impact will proceed directly to the Rules committee where they remain until they are pulled to the floor for debate and vote.

Last Tuesday, the House Finance committee heard a suite of tax bills including [HB 1473](#) which creates a property tax on the ownership of stocks, bonds, and other financial assets over \$250 million. The revenue generated is dedicated to four funds - the Education Legacy Trust Fund, which is a dedicated funding source for early learning, K-12, and higher education; the Housing Trust Fund, which pays for the construction of affordable housing, and two new funds created in the bill: a Disabilities Care Trust account that will pay for services for Washingtonians with disabilities; and a Taxpayer Justice account that will offer credits against taxes paid by low and middle-income families.

HB 1473 attracted a lot of attention, with 2,531 signed in not wishing to testify. A large group did testify however, including perennial anti-tax activist Tim Eyman, as well as supporters of the policy including the Washington Education Association, the Statewide Poverty Action Network, and the Washington Low Income Housing Alliance.