Capitol News

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# The 2021 Legislature convenes on Monday, January 11, for what surely will be an unprecedented session. The violence at our nation’s capital and in Olympia last week has placed a somber tone on the opening of the legislative session.

WSLHA’s **priority legislation** this session is **HB 1043**, the bill establishing the **Audiology-SLP Licensure Compact (ASLP-IC)** in Washington**.** This bill would grant qualified audiologists and SLPs the privilege to practice in other compact member states. Six states have already joined the compact; it becomes effective when ten states have joined. You can view the bill[here](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1043&Initiative=false&Year=2021)**.** You can find more information about the compact [here](https://aslpcompact.com/compact-toolkit/).

WSHLA is also supporting **HB 1047**, legislation that would **mandate insurance coverage for children’s hearing instruments**. You can view the bill [here](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1047&Initiative=false&Year=2021).

Lawmakers will convene at the Capitol on Monday in order to pass rules allowing them to conduct business virtually. After Monday, there will be limited legislators and staff at the Capitol and all business will be conducted virtually. To ensure the health and safety of the public, all legislative buildings remain closed to the public.

# Because of the virtual nature of the session, legislators will have a decreased workload capacity; they simply cannot manage the volume of bills they would see in a typical session. As such, lawmakers have established the following legislative priorities: responding to the 2021-23 biennial budgets; pandemic and economic recovery; racial equity; and climate response.

# Lawmakers will get to work this week with hearings on the Governor’s operating and capital budgets on Tuesday and Thursday. Also on Thursday, the House Finance Committee will hear HB 1095, a bill that would exempt federal COVID relief grants from the B&O tax; and the Senate Ways & Means Committee will hold a hearing on SB 5096, a bill establishing a capital gains tax.

# Other committees will be conducting work sessions to orient their new members to the policy areas included in their committee work. On Wednesday, the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee will hold a work session on “pandemics: past, present, and future”; on Friday, that committee will hold a work session on the impact of the pandemic on health care service delivery.

# The Legislature’s [website](http://leg.wa.gov/) contains information on legislators’ backgrounds, committee assignments and presentations from hearings. TVW’s [website](http://tvw.org/) will show all committee hearings and floor sessions throughout the session.