Capitol News

February 23, 2020

Melissa Johnson, WSLHA Lobbyist

Legislators completed full time floor action last Wednesday to meet the “house of origin” cutoff. They now return to committee hearings and executive action on the opposite chamber’s bills, in anticipation of the next cutoff on 2/28. That’s the deadline for bills to be voted out of the opposite chamber’s policy committee.

Last week also saw the state’s revenue forecast released. It was a positive forecast: $600 million additional revenue for this biennium; and $526 million for the 21-23 biennium. One caution, however, is that half of this revenue is one-time revenue.

On Monday, the House and Senate fiscal committees will hold hearings on their respective supplemental budgets. The committees will vote the budgets out on Tuesday (Senate) and Wednesday (House), with floor votes expected at the end of the week.

Our insurance priority bills saw action again last week. Our health benefit manager bill **(SB 5601)** was voted out of the Senate unanimously. It is scheduled for a hearing in the House Health Care & Wellness Committee next Tuesday, and executive action scheduled for Wednesday and Thursday.

And our prior authorization bill **(SB 5887)** was voted out of the House Health Care & Wellness Committee last Friday. There was one technical amendment that corrected a reference to “prior authorization”.

The music therapy bill, **SB 5485**, died in the Senate.

**SB 5385**, a bill regarding telemedicine reimbursement from last session, is now moving through the Legislature. It requires insurers to reimburse providers for telemedicine at the same rate as if performed in person.  The bill does allow hospitals, hospital systems, telemedicine companies, and practices of 11 providers or more to negotiate a different rate of reimbursement.  It was heard in the House Health Care & Wellness Committee last Friday and is scheduled for a vote out of that committee this week.