Capitol News

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Melissa Johnson, WSLHA Lobbyist

House and Senate Democrats released their budgets on Monday. Lawmakers are benefiting from higher-than-expected revenues of $1.5 billion for this biennium. Both budgets focus on addressing homelessness, with significant investments in the Housing Trust Fund, supportive housing, foreclosure assistance, and other programs.

In health care, the House budget provides an additional $14.5 million for foundational public health and $17.6 million for Medicaid rate increases for primary care and behavioral health services. The Senate budget has $22 million for foundational public health and a $9.9 million increase in Medicaid rates for primary care providers.

The House budget contains $560,000 for OSPI to develop or purchase online learning modules for all K-2 educators and their school teams on the topics of dyslexia and foundational literacy skills to support early screening for dyslexia.

The Senate passed its budget on Thursday; the House passed its budget on Friday. Budget negotiations between the chambers will continue in earnest to come up with a final budget.

Our insurance priority bills continue to move through the Legislature. Our health benefit manager bill (SB 5601) was voted out of the House Health Care & Wellness Committee on Thursday and was heard in the House Appropriations Committee on Saturday.

Our prior authorization bill (SB 5887) is scheduled for a vote in the House on Monday.

Cutoff deadlines are coming very quickly now, as we approach the last two weeks of session. Today is the cutoff for bills to be voted out of the opposite chamber’s policy committee. Monday is the cutoff for bills with a fiscal impact to be voted out of the opposite chamber’s fiscal committee. And next Friday is the deadline for bills to be voted out of their opposite chamber. The exception to these cutoffs are bills deemed “necessary to implement the budget”; they are alive until the end of session. The Legislature is scheduled to adjourn on March 12th.