Capitol News

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The Legislature adjourned sine die on Thursday evening, with the COVID-19 virus’s health and economic effects looming large. Lawmakers completed their last major business these last few days of session, passing supplemental operating, transportation, and capital budgets. Everyone is ready to practice social distancing and return home.

The final supplemental operating budget focused on funding public health’s response to COVID-19 ($200 million); funding housing and homelessness programs ($170 million); and state hospital operations and safety funding ($45 million). There was funding for a 15% Medicaid rate increase for primary care and certain behavioral health services. **And there was also funding for a Medicaid home health rate increase beginning January 1, 2021.**

Despite this level of new spending, lawmakers leave the state operating budget with a $918 million balance, and a projected $2 billion balance in the state’s Budget Stabilization Account (aka Rainy Day Fund).

**Both our prior authorization bill (SB 5887) and our health benefit manager bill (SB 5601) have been delivered to Governor Inslee for his signature into law!**

Attention now turns to Governor Inslee for his action on bills that passed the Legislature. For most bills, the Governor has 20 days to take action. And in response to COVID-19, the usual public bill signings are cancelled; instead, bill signing ceremonies will be limited to the prime sponsor of the bill and one guest (and the prime sponsor of the companion bill, if any, and one guest).