

Capitol News

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WSLHA Priorities

In school funding news, [HB 2180](#), the bill that increases the **K-12 special education enrollment funding** cap from 15% to 17.25%, passed the House Appropriations Committee and is now on the second reading calendar. It also requires the State Auditor to conduct a review of the prevalence of disabilities. Its companion bill, [SB 6014](#), did not pass the Senate Ways & Means Committee and is dead.

[HB 2494](#) is another school funding bill that **increases funding to materials, supplies, and operating costs** (MSOC) for school districts. This includes technology, curriculum, textbooks, library materials, facilities maintenance, and central office administration. It is now on the House second reading calendar.

[HB 1508](#), is legislation from last session that seeks to address **the cause of increased health care costs**. Last session, it included civil fines for providers who exceed the health care cost growth benchmark, with exceptions for small providers.

This session, it has been narrowed considerably, and no longer contains any penalties for providers. Instead, it directs the state's Health Care Cost Transparency Board to survey underinsurance among Washington residents, along with insurance trends among employers and employees. It also requires the Transparency Board to hold a public hearing each year to discuss the growth in total health care expenditures and identify payers or health care providers whose health care cost growth exceeded the health care cost growth benchmark. Finally, it increases the membership of the Transparency Board's Health Care Stakeholder Advisory Committee by adding members representing the interests of consumers, labor purchasers, and employer purchasers. HB 1508 passed the House and has been scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee on Thursday.

Another health care bill from last session has been resurrected. [SB 5241](#) modifies reporting requirements for **mergers, acquisitions, or contracting affiliations** between hospitals, hospital systems, or provider organizations. It also requires the Attorney General to determine, through a public process, if the transaction would detrimentally affect the continued existence of accessible, affordable health care in the state for at least ten years after the transaction occurs. This bill passed the Senate on Thursday. It's scheduled for a hearing in the House Civil Rights & Judiciary Committee on Wednesday.

General News

We have now passed the mid-point of session and notably, the house of origin fiscal cutoff. Surviving bills have advanced to the Rules Committees where members of both parties are allowed to “pull” or select a few bills at each meeting to advance towards the floor.

Less controversial bills may be placed on the suspension calendar in the House and the consent calendar in the Senate and heard early during this period before rules limiting debate are applied. Bills that will require debate are placed on the regular calendar. On second reading, the chambers debate bills and offer amendments. If a bill has been amended in committee or on the floor in the house of origin, it is engrossed, meaning the amendments are incorporated into the body of the bill. On third reading, the chambers vote to pass a bill. This repeating process of Rules, caucus, and floor time will continue until Tuesday’s deadline for bills to pass their chamber of origin.

On Wednesday, committees resume their hearings, this time on bills that made it over from the opposite chamber. Policy committees only have one week to hear and pass bills before their cutoff deadline of February 21st.

Wednesday is an important day for budget writers. That’s when the state’s revenue forecast is released. They will analyze the forecast and make any necessary changes to their draft budgets. We anticipate the House and Senate supplemental operating budgets to be released soon thereafter, likely the week of February 19th.

Important Dates

February 13 - House of Origin Cutoff

February 21 - Opposite House Policy Committee Cutoff

February 26 - Opposite House Fiscal Committee Cutoff

March 1 - Floor Cutoff

March 7 - Last day of Regular Session