

## Capitol News

### January 21, 2024

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### WSLHA Priority Bills

Good news! WSLHA's priority bill [HB 1655](#), is scheduled for a hearing on Wednesday in the House Health Care & Wellness Committee. This is the bill that requires a cost-of-living increase in reimbursement for contracts between private practice health care providers (including SLPs and audiologists) and insurers. [Please sign in PRO on HB 1655!](#)

Its companion bill, [SB 6161](#), may be scheduled for a hearing the week of January 29<sup>th</sup>.

[SB 6014](#), the bill that increases the K-12 special education enrollment funding cap from 15% to 17.25%, passed the Senate Early Learning & K12 Committee last week and now goes to the Senate Ways & Means Committee for consideration. [HB 2180](#), the companion bill, was heard last week in the House Appropriations Committee.

### General News

While Martin Luther King Jr. Day is a holiday for many, it is one of the busiest days in the legislative calendar, with constituents arriving by busload to meet with their legislators. Bills are moving quickly in committees already and there are plenty to track. This year, over 1,000 new bills have been introduced for the short session.

Early Tuesday morning, Democrat majority budget writers received good news that the U.S. Supreme Court will not review *Quinn v. Washington*, the lawsuit challenging Washington's 7% tax on capital gains above \$250,000. The tax brought in nearly \$900 million in revenue in the first year, which budget writers are counting on to fund education. This is not the end of the story though, as the issue may still appear as an initiative on the November ballot, pending signature verification and action by the Legislature.

Later Tuesday morning, Secretary of State Steve Hobbs notified the Legislature that signature verification of Initiative 2117 (concerning carbon tax credit trading) has been completed and has been certified. The Legislature must now approve that initiative or send it to voters with or without an alternative measure. The signatures on the other pending initiatives, including capital gains, are currently being verified by the Secretary of State.

On Wednesday, the House Civil Rights and Judiciary committee heard HB 2119 which would prohibit the garnishment of wages for medical debt. In his remarks, the sponsor noted that

medical debt is increasing and is worse in lower income communities and communities of color and that the University of Washington, PeaceHealth, Providence and a few other hospitals have already moved away from garnishment. But the bill received harsh criticism from the Washington State Medical Association and the Washington State Hospital Association, who cite already available charity care.

If legislators have their way this session, there will be several additions to requirements for public education in the future. On Wednesday, the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education committee heard four bills addressing additional topics of education. SB 5813 would require instruction on agricultural literacy; SB 5819 makes financial education a graduation prerequisite; SB 5849 creates a computer science competence graduation requirement; and SB 5851 requires genocide and Holocaust education.

**Upcoming Dates:**

January 31 - Policy Committee Cutoff  
February 5 - Fiscal Committee Cutoff  
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