

Capitol News

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Week two of the legislative session saw Democrats rolling out several of their high-profile priorities including policies on guns, nurse staffing, recycling, middle housing, and a wealth tax - priorities that also tend to bring out huge numbers of supporters and opponents.

Medium density, or “middle” housing is addressed in HB 1110, a bill that would require cities to allow more housing density in single-family neighborhoods. The bill effectively ends single-family zoning, something that Oregon did in 2019 and California did in 2021. The bill is supported by urbanists and builders, but legislators will face criticism from those who want to maintain single-family zoning.

Senator Noel Frame and Representative My-Linh Thai introduced a Wealth Tax bill this week. HB 1473 and SB 5486 would create a property tax on the ownership of stocks, bonds, and other financial assets over \$250 million. The revenue generated is dedicated to four funds - the Education Legacy Trust Fund, which is a dedicated funding source for early learning, K-12, and higher education; the Housing Trust Fund, which pays for the construction of affordable housing; and two new funds created in the bill: a Disabilities Care Trust account that will pay for services for Washingtonians with disabilities, and a Taxpayer Justice account, that will offer credits against taxes paid by low and middle-income families.

This week, Democrats have reproductive rights on their agenda and will bring forward bills in several committees, including policies on access to abortion, consumer health data, and protecting employers that provide access to reproductive care services.

WSLHA Priorities

[HB 1001](#), the **audiologist/speech language pathologist licensure compact** bill, was voted out of the Postsecondary Education & Workforce Committee last Friday. It is now in the Rules Committee.

This compact would allow for easier licensing across state lines for SLPs and audiologists by granting a “privilege to practice” in all states that are members of the compact. So far, 23 states have joined, including Idaho. You can find out more information about the compact [here](#).

[HB 1222](#) is the WSLHA priority legislation that **mandates large group insurance plan coverage** (employers with more than 50 employees) **for hearing instruments and the services necessary to fit them**. It was heard in the House Health Care & Wellness Committee on Wednesday. Testimony from patients, parents, and kids made an incredible impact on the committee members. The bill is scheduled for a vote in that committee on Friday.