

Capitol News Report

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Melissa Johnson, WSLHA Lobbyist

WSLHA Priority Bills

- [HB 1043](#) is the bill that establishes Washington as a member of the **Audiology & Speech-Language Pathology Compact (ASLP-IC)**. The Compact facilitates the practice of audiology and speech-language pathology by securing a privilege to practice in a member state or through telehealth. This bill is scheduled for a **hearing on January 31st**. WSLHA President Bethany Davis and I will be testifying on behalf of WSLHA. Susan Adams of ASHA will also be testifying.

Thank you to those who have signed in support of this bill! **We already have almost 100 SLPs who have signed in “pro”!**

- [HB 1854](#) requires **insurance coverage for hearing aids** for both children and adults. This bill will be **heard on Wednesday**. There is also a related work session on new state-mandated health benefits scheduled on Wednesday.

Other Bills of Interest This Week

- [HB 5848](#) licenses **music therapists**. It is being heard on Monday. WSLHA has opposed this bill in the past because it does not specifically prohibit music therapists from providing communication disorder services. However, WSLHA has negotiated the bill so that it now includes the following language (shout out to ASHA who negotiated this language at the national level):
 - Music therapists cannot evaluate, examine, instruct, or counsel individuals suffering from disorders or conditions that affect speech, language, communication, and swallowing.
 - An individual licensed as a professional music therapist may not represent to the public that the individual is authorized to treat a communication disorder.
 - Before providing music therapy services to a client for an identified clinical or developmental need, the licensee shall review with the health care provider(s) involved in the client’s care the client’s diagnosis, treatment needs, and treatment plan.
 - Before providing music therapy services to a student for an identified educational need, the licensee shall review with the IFSP or IEP team the student’s diagnosis, treatment needs, and treatment plan.
 - WSLHA will be testifying at the hearing on Monday.

General News from Last Week

As the third week of session ends, **one third of the frenetic 60-day session has now passed**. Next week is the first deadline bills must meet to continue in the process, the cutoff to be voted out of the policy committee. Then, if the bill has a financial impact, the bill must be voted out of a fiscal committee within a swift four-day period.

Governor Inslee signed the first bills of the 2022 session on Thursday. HB 1732 and HB 1733 are the two policies that delay and provide exemptions to the **Washington Cares program**. The bill was effective immediately upon Governor Inslee's signature. Collection of premiums is now delayed until July 2023. Any premiums collected so far by private employers are to be refunded within 120 days.

In election news, **Senator Reuven Carlyle announced this week that he will not seek re-election in 2022**. Carlyle, who was first elected to the House in 2008, has championed key climate change and digital privacy legislation. His seatmate, Representative Noel Frame, announced her candidacy for the Senate shortly after Carlyle's announcement. Frame currently chairs the House Finance Committee.

On Thursday, the Senate Labor, Commerce & Tribal Affairs Committee heard SB 5911, a bill requiring the State of Washington to provide a **one-time hazard pay retention bonus to certain eligible health care employees** practicing in specified COVID units. The bill also prohibits employers from taking adverse employment actions to prevent or diminish the receipt of bonuses. The amount would be dependent on how much is appropriated by the Legislature; federal dollars would be used. The bill is supported both by the nurses' unions and the Washington State Hospital Association. The nurses' unions have recommended that all frontline workers, not just those in COVID units, be included. No executive session is scheduled yet.

On Friday, the Senate State Government & Elections Committee heard SB 5909, legislation giving **legislative leadership the power to terminate a governor's state of emergency**. The bill would similarly allow leadership to terminate prohibitive emergency orders like the current vaccine mandate and eviction moratorium. The bill also makes permanent the Bicameral Legislative Unanticipated Revenue Oversight Committee that gives the involvement in the allocation of federal funding. 157 people signed in to testify and 5,457 signed in to have their position on the bill noted, the vast majority of whom were in support.

In remarks made last week, both House and Senate leadership indicated **a desire to return to in-person floor action**, beginning the week of February 7th. This decision will be predicated on the latest public health information to ensure that legislators can convene safely. Committee meetings will remain remote for the entirety of the session.

Important Dates:

February 3 – House of Origin Policy Cutoff
February 7 – House of Origin Fiscal Cutoff
February 15 – House of Origin Floor Cutoff
February 24 – Opposite House Policy Cutoff
February 28 – Opposite House Fiscal Cutoff
March 4 – Opposite House Floor Cutoff
March 10 – Sine Die