

Lobbyist Report

Month October 2020

Meetings/Workgroups attended

October 7 - Senator David Frockt

October 9 - Tax Workgroup (monitored)

October 16 - Rep. Alex Ybarra

October 22 - Pre-Legislative Meeting

Legislative Summary for Mental Health Specifically (To Send to Members)

We spoke at length with Senator David Frockt, a ranking member of the Senate Health Care Committee and the Behavioral Health Sub-Committee. We discussed the issue of telehealth parity and offered him information from the insurance companies to show the current situation of how some insurance companies are continuing to not pay equally. He was very concerned about this issue and we will remain in contact with him if the problem continues.

I attended an online zoom tax restructuring workgroup meeting, which wasn't entirely relevant to WMHCA, but I wanted to see if there were any areas where money might be given/taken away that could effect your profession. Luckily, there wasn't anything that would be impactful.

I met with Rep. Alex Ybarra in his district (Douglas County) and went over our topics. He lives in a rural, mostly hispanic area and mental health is not something that is considered acceptable, mainly due to religious reasons. He will be a very good ally as we move forward discussing the importance of telehealth and the need for broadband in rural areas.

There was a WHMCA pre legislative meeting with a few select board members where we went over our agenda and I answered general questions to WHMCA's new legislative director.

Meetings Requested

Currently working on scheduling appointments with all newly elected candidates as well as more key incumbents.

General Legislative News

October was a month full of tension leading up to the 2020 General Election. Jay Inslee was re-elected with former Congressman Denny Heck elected as Lt. Governor

Overall, legislators were focused on fundraising and campaigning and therefore access for meetings was minimal.

The 24 hour news cycle focused on the upcoming election and little else has been discussed.

Post-Election results have proven to be good for WMHCA as we picked up more Democrats, a party which is more emphatic to our issues. With Governor Inslee being re-elected, we can look forward to more legislation focused on finding a solution to the mental health crisis in our state. Police reform is another issue that we will be following closely moving forward. Mental health intervention can possibly serve as a tool they will be able to use to deescalate situations of all sorts and my hope is that WHMCA will be brought to the table to offer our opinions and expertise.

What's on the Horizon?

Over the next 2 months, my goal is to reach out to all of the newly elected officials to introduce myself, and WHMCA, and if anyone would like to join these meetings, please let me know. It will be imperative to put faces to names before session starts since session is going to be 100% virtual this year. No one is quite sure what that is going to look like yet, but with the plethora of lobbyists in Olympia, now is the time to build relationships. I predict legislators are going to be overwhelmed once session starts so the time is now to have the conversations.

Other things I've been tracking or paying attention to:

Currently, keeping up with the election results is my highest priority. There are a few very close calls that might be re-counted that could make a very big difference to the legislature overall. All of the VOLK meetings have continued to be cancelled but the workgroup has discussed starting them again soon.

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