

Lobbyist Report

Month February 2021



Meetings/Workgroups attended:

February 3 O2G Meeting

February 4 Connect WA Coalition (Digital Equity)

February 4 Wed Night Study Group (coalition of health care lobbyists)

February 16 Rep. Gilday

February 18 Behavior Health Roundtable

February 18 Connect WA Coalition (Digital Equity)

February 18 & 25 Wed Night Study Group (coalition of health care lobbyists)

Legislators have been on the floor for the past week and I've been monitoring these sessions daily.

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

Mental health policy bills that do not have a fiscal note are now officially marked as "dead", although there are always ways that legislators can revive bills until they gavel out and Sine Die. I'm tracking numerous bills that we will be able to speak on during our virtual day on the hill (March 11th.)

We are officially half way through the 2021 session and if the rumors are true, we will be ending on time with the chance of a special session once COVID is a little more under control. There is a lot of frustration regarding virtual session. I'm aware that is repetitive but not being in the building has made lobbying quite difficult. The good news is that behavior health bills, more often than not, are bills that legislators support as they want to do everything they can to end the mental health crisis that is facing our state.

[2021 State Legislative Priorities for Behavioral Health](#)

1. Protect Medicaid behavioral health rates & support value-based payment mechanisms.
2. Protect access to community-based crisis services.
3. Fully and effectively fund Phase 2 (\$19.8M) of the Trueblood Settlement Agreement.
4. Require operation of new community-based treatment beds prior to closing more Western State Hospital (WSH) civil wards of a similar scale.
5. Strengthen and grow the vital behavioral health workforce.

These priorities fall in line with WMHCA priorities and we will continue to work on legislation to

reach these goals.

Meetings Requested:

I am focusing on meetings for our virtual day on the hill.

General Legislative News

The 105-day session is nearing its halfway point. The first round of committee deadlines have just occurred, which was the last stop for many bills this session, however many are still alive and continuing the process.

Some of the big themes of the legislative session is additional state revenue through the form of a capital gains tax proposal, which is still alive, yet faces a difficult legislative path. There will be significant attention on this legislation, especially during the second half of the session when the state budget and revenue negotiations takes center stage. There are also transportation sector revenues being discussed, in the form of fuel taxes and other taxes/fees. There is broad republican opposition to these proposals, as well as several moderate democrats that are so far staying quiet on how they will vote. Much remains to be seen.

The virtual session has certainly showed its challenges, but in many ways does not appear to be slowing the legislature down on their appetite to consider legislation. There is a surprisingly large amount of bills introduced this year, after legislative leaders and Governor called for a 'basics' session.

Governor Inslee signed into law HB 1368 on Friday, February 19th, which appropriates \$2.2 billion in federal funding that has been allocated to states in response to the ongoing COVID emergency. This funding includes an additional \$240 million for business assistance grants. I will provide more information on access to those grants once the process and criteria is announced. With prior experience, we know that the grants and other assistance have been hard to come by. It is unknown who and under what criteria this additional federal money will be available to businesses.

Looking forward - session timeline

Monday, February 22 was the second cutoff date of the 2021 session, known as the "Fiscal Cutoff". After that point, bills that have not moved passed their house of origin budget committees will most likely be dead, except for bills that are 'necessary to implement the budget.' No bill is truly ever dead until the final adjournment of a session.

The next cutoff date is be Tuesday, March 9, which is the "House of Origin" cutoff, where bills must be voted out of their respective original House and Senate chambers.

After March 9, the legislative process will repeat itself and look similar to how the first weeks of session did. There will be about 20 days until the second round of cutoffs begin. March 26 is when the "second policy cutoff" date where bills must make it out of the opposite chamber's committee.

April 11 is when most bills must be passed by both chambers. From April 11 to April 25, only bills

that are related to budget matters may be acted upon. April 25 is the last day of the session.

We expect the possibility of at least one 'special session' in the late summer or early fall this year. More info to come, stay tuned on that.

What's on the Horizon?

We will be holding a virtual "Day on the Hill" March 11th. This will involve virtual meetings with legislators throughout the day. Please contact WMHCA if you'd like to join!

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

Please see our tracking list for more information on bills we are following.

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