

Lobbyist Report

Month August 2021



Meetings/Workgroups attended

8/4 - Workforce & Rates Subgroup

8/11 - Rep. Debra Entemear

8/12 - Rep. Eileen Cody

8/12 - Behavioral Health Coalition Meeting

8/16 - Rep. April Berg

8/17 - Rep. Bruce Chandler

8/17 - Rep. Chris Corry

8/17 - Sen. Curtis King

8/18 - Workforce & Rates Subgroup

8/31 - NAMI

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

The backlash of the police reform bills and its impact on Washington has been the most discussed topic this month. This is out of the WMHCA realm directly, but the need for services is rampant and therefore we are somewhat involved in the discussion. By deferring arrests and requesting treatment, people are desperately trying to get in to a treatment center, counseling, etc - many to no avail. The lack of providers in community mental health centers is of high concern as well as the limited amount of providers that take medicaid. In the workforce & rates subgroup, we are discussing what possibilities exist to address this problem. An increase in wages, incentives to enter the profession, paid internships, and increasing in reimbursement rates are all on the table. With a short session coming up, the group is trying to determine what the most obtainable approach should be.

Meetings Requested

Rep. Lauren Davis

Sen. Annette Cleveland

Sen. Jeaninne Darnielle

Sen. Manka Dhingra

Rep. Nicole Macri

General Legislative News

The increase in COVID numbers and the fear of the Delta variant has the legislature buzzing about

a potential virtual session. Most people in both parties and all lobbyists (pretty much) do not want this to happen, but the political state of the vaccine and mandates has many people furious and the line in the sand is getting deeper. If the Governor mandates legislators to be vaccinated to come in to the Capitol building, I am certain that they will "lock up" and stand their ground. Many, if not most, Republicans are not anti-vaccination, they are anti-mandate and this might be the straw that breaks the camels back moving forward. If we do a virtual session, Leadership in the Majority will once again be able to push their agenda without much discussion from the other party. It has become such a touchy subject and shouldn't have ever been politicized because the result is now a strong polarization that is not benefiting anyone.

There were talks of a special session to fix the transportation budget but if a special session is called, all bills become "alive" once again and the Republicans will certainly take the opportunity to call out the Democrats on the bills they passed that left us in the turmoil we are in today. We will know more about the possibility of the special session by the end of the month, but it is my opinion that it will not happen.

Overall, everything is extremely volatile and for lack of better words "unprecedented". We are in unknown waters and legislators are uncertain on how to navigate, as are most of us.

What's on the Horizon?

I will continue to attend the subgroup and workgroup meetings with the hope of spearheading a tangible plan to at least get one tangible piece of legislation moving next year. We are still pushing for portability and reciprocity as well as continuing to provide input in these groups from WMHCA's perspective. Throughout September, October and November we will have to wait and see where the COVID pandemic leads us.

Other things I've been tracking or paying attention to
Special session discussions, virtual vs in person session,

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