

Lobbyist Report

Month February 2022



Meetings/Work groups attended

WMHCA Lobby Day: Feb 1 & 2

Sen. Saldana

Rep. Riccelli

Sen. Billig

Rep. Calider

Rep. Donaghy

Speaker Jinkins

Rep. Harris

Sen. Conway

Sen. Lovick

Sen. Cleveland

Sen. Hunt

Rep. Doglio

Rep. Dolan

Rep. Cody

Sen. Wilson

Sen. Randall

Rep. Slatter

Feb 3 - Rep. Rule

Feb 7 - Rep. Orwall

Feb 16 - Rep. Cody

Feb 17 - Rep. Simmons, Rep. Dent

Feb 25 - Rep. Abbarno

Behavioral Health Coalition Meetings - Feb 2 & Feb 23

All relative legislative committee hearings, stakeholder groups, and general discussions

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

February was a very busy month for WMHCA, beginning with our lobby days taking place on Feb 1 and 2. Members met with lawmakers to discuss our priority issues and these meetings were successful in establishing relationships, moving or stopping bills, learning more about the legislators themselves, and ideas for the future.

From the priority bills we have been tracking, we have managed to stop undesired pieces of legislation from moving while supporting issues that are good for our members and your clients. Due to the complicated nature of a virtual interim and another virtual session, we have used our already strong relationships with lawmakers and their staff to have our voice be heard and WMHCA has made a large impact on a variety of issues this session.

While we move through the final days of session, we are hopeful that we have set up the association for great successes for 2023. Our reliable, honest, and open discussions with legislators has put us "on the map" and we will be taking the lead on a variety of issues which we will start working on over the summer.

High Priority Bills (Alive):

[SHB 1800](#) - Increasing access to behavioral health services for minors.

Support - Status: Senate Rules

[SHB 1821](#) - Concerning the definition of established relationship for purposes of audio-only telemedicine.

Support - Status: Senate Floor Calendar

[SB 5596](#) - Conforming disclosure restrictions for mental health counselors, marriage and family therapists, and social workers to the requirements of the Uniform Health Care Information Act.

Oppose - Status House Rules

[SSB 5564](#) - Concerning providing quality behavioral health co-response services

Support - Status: House Rules

Priority Bills (Dead):

[HB 1865](#) - Addressing the behavioral health workforce shortage and expanding access to peer services by creating the profession of certified peer specialists.

Oppose

[E2SSB 5884](#) - Establishing behavioral health support specialists.

Oppose

General Legislative News

With less than 2 weeks left in the legislative session, both parties are tired, strained and frustrated. The lack of bi-partisan efforts is evident and the general consensus is that finishing this session on time is imperative so we can start moving forward towards a typical interim and 2023 in-person session.

The Washington State House and Senate released their proposed supplemental budgets for the remainder of the 2021-2023 biennium. There is currently a budget surplus from increased tax revenue, remaining federal pandemic relief funds, and savings from money not spent on policy changes last year.

As a result, the Legislature added significant new funding in transportation, K-12 education, rental assistance, homelessness initiatives and substantial investments in health care. The final budget will be released by March 10, following negotiations between the House and Senate.

Both budgets make significant investments in behavioral health: House: \$141 million state and \$262 million total funds. Senate: \$172 million state and \$228 million total funds.

- \$563,000 state to help facilitate the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Workgroup and develop a strategic plan for behavioral health services for children and youth.
- \$6.3 million state (\$12.6 million total) to increase the number of community-contracted Children's Long-Term Inpatient Program (CLIP) beds.
- \$2.1 million state (\$2.6 total) toward youth inpatient navigators to help support families and children that need, but are unable to find, long-term inpatient beds.
- \$17.4 million state (\$51 million total) to increase Medicaid reimbursement rates by 7% for community behavioral health providers contracted through managed care organizations.

- \$42 million state (\$100 million total) one-time funds to assist behavioral health providers that serve Medicaid and state-funded clients and experienced revenue losses or increased expenses due to the COVID-19 epidemic.
- \$48,000 state (\$97,000 total) to establish a 32-bed, short-term Residential Crisis Stabilization Program for youth with severe behavioral health diagnoses.
- \$2.2 million state funds (\$3.1 total) to manage and contract for 16 beds at the residential treatment facility in Vancouver and 16 beds planned for the residential treatment facility in Snohomish County.
- \$4.4 million state funds (\$5.3 total) for assisted outpatient treatment.
- \$3.9 million state funds for non-Medicaid funding to increase BH-ASO and MCO wraparound service contract and implement a 7% rate to address services needs that cannot be paid for with Medicaid funds.
- \$1.5 million state funds for reopening E&Ts, increasing staff capacity, and expanding outpatient services for young adults ages 18-24 in Clark and Spokane counties.

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