

Lobbyist Report

Month December 2022



Meetings/Work Groups Attended

December 1 & 2 - Legislative Committee Days

Blake Advisory Committee

Senate & House Health Care

Social Event/Receptions

Rep. Joe Schmick

Sen. Ron Muzzall

Rep. Drew Stokesbary

December 5 - WMHCA Subcommittee Meeting

December 15 - Rep. Joe Schmick

December 16 - WMHCA Lobby Day Discussion

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

The first half of December was very busy as we were diligently working to finalize the language for the counseling compact bill to have it ready for pre-filing before the legislative session begins on January 9th. Working closely with Health Care Staff, we put together our proposal for the 2023 Compact Bill and along with our prime sponsors, Rep. Mari Leavitt and Sen. Ron Muzzall, we have two bills that will be introduced and filed in January of 2023. The House version has a few minor changes that will need to be corrected but that will be handled during the first hearing when the bill is introduced. The goal of having two companion bills is to ensure the legislation is moved accordingly during the short time frame that is allowed.

The House tends to move more quickly than the Senate but ideally, both bills will track simultaneously and pass over from their "house of origin" accordingly. Once in the final stages of passage, the House and Senate will concur on the bill and the final version will be voted on, passed, and (hopefully) signed by the Governor. To follow the legislative process, please join one of WMHCA's subcommittees and be sure to check our postings and newsletters frequently!

WMHCA will be holding our annual "Lobby Day" on January 26th. This is a wonderful opportunity for you to be a part of the process! We will set up meetings for you with your legislators and you'll be given the opportunity to either travel to Olympia or participate in

a virtual meeting with your legislator. I highly recommend making the trip to the Capitol if you are able as it's a fun and informative experience where you can see what truly happens in Olympia. We will host another information session prior to lobby day to discuss our issues and explain how lobby day works. We anticipate our main focus of discussion will be the Counseling Compact but there will likely be other topics we are interested in as well.

I will be tracking all bills and issues that are related to mental/behavioral health and they will be updated weekly on the WHMHCA website. If there is anything that is of interest to you specifically, do not hesitate to contact me directly at

sara@sarastewartinc.com

I look forward to serving you and WMHCA once again during the 2023 legislative session! Session begins on January 9th and Sine Die is scheduled for April 25 (pending no special sessions are instated.) I encourage all of you to participate as much as possible and I am here as a resource for you if you have any questions, comments or concerns! Happy New Year!

Meetings Requested

Meetings with all Health Care Committee Members and Leadership will be requested once members have their schedules settled and are starting to make appointments.

General Legislative News

The Legislature has been 100% virtual for the past 2 years and this session is surely to be a learning experience for many. There are many members who have been in office for the past two years but have never worked from Olympia and there was a high turn over during the last election, mostly due to members retiring. There has also been a great deal of turn over in staffing and we can expect that it will take a bit of time for all parties to become settled in over the first few weeks of January.

The Democrats still remain in the majority of both Houses and for the first time in 30 years, the Secretary of State's office is also held by a Democrat. This means that the Governors Office, Lt. Governor's Office, Treasurer, Attorney General and the Secretary of State are all Democrats. All are hoping for a bipartisan unity as we move into 2023, but major issues that typically have party line division will more than likely remain that way. It will be a challenging session for sure between the newness of it all and the strong majority lines but a Democrat majority is always good for health care professions, especially mental health and services relating to those in need.

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

We are tracking all pieces of legislation relating to behavioral health and WMHCA is a part of a variety of coalition/stakeholder groups. I will be participating as much as possible in all weekly meetings and will keep you apprised of any discussions relevant to our association and it's members.