

## Lobbyist Report

Month February



### Meetings/Groups Attended

Feb 1 - Workforce and Rates Subcommittee  
Feb 1 - AWB Reception  
Feb 2 - Rep. Kloba  
Feb 2 - Rep. Alvarado  
Feb 3 - WMHCA Legislative Committee  
Feb 3 - Rep. Bateman/Stakeholders RE: HB1724  
Feb 7 - Rep. Bateman/Stakeholders RE: HB1724  
Feb 7 - Behavioral Health Coalition Meeting  
Feb 10 - Licensed Counselors Advisory Committee  
Feb 10 - Rep. Slatter  
Feb 13 - Rep. Senn  
Feb 14 - Behavioral Health Coalition Meeting  
Feb 16 - Health Care Providers Lobbying Coalition Meeting  
Feb 21 - Health Care Providers Lobbying Coalition Meeting  
Feb 21 - Behavioral Health Coalition Meeting  
Feb 22 - Workforce and Rates Subcommittee  
Feb 24 - WMHCA Board Meeting  
All relative house and senate committee hearings and coalition meetings

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

All bills had until February 24th to pass the first “cut-off” deadline. Many behavioral health bills we are working on and tracking have made it through (see the attached bill tracking list) and are now on the way to the floor calendar in their respective chambers. Once a bill is passed out of one chamber, the House, for example, will be sent to the Senate, where it starts from the beginning with an initial hearing in committee.

WMHCA’s primary bill, HB 1069 - The Counseling Compact, flew through the House, and although we hope to make some changes in the Senate, we are excited that it moved so quickly. We anticipate our first Senate hearing sometime in the second week of March. Other priority bills include HB 1027 - Audio-only Telemedicine, HB 1724 - Addressing the Behavioral Health Workforce, HB 1124 - Regarding the 988 System, and SB 5120 - Establishing 23-Hour Crisis

centers.

We held our second lobby day (virtually) in February, and although it wasn't as big as our in-person day, thank you to everyone who participated! Legislators are always eager to hear from their constituents about your work. We were able to meet with some key players, and we are continuing to build strong relationships with lawmakers.

The workforce has been a high-priority topic for legislators, and we have been speaking with them regularly regarding our concerns and insight into the underlying problems our state is facing. We are still hoping for a work session to present our findings from the workshop we held over the summer. The pay equity and reimbursement issue needs to be seriously addressed, and we hope for a joint work session to present our findings.

Bills have until March 8th to pass out of their house of origin, and we will follow our priority bills closely. As the amount of bills on the table dwindles, we can focus on those likely to pass this year. We are also avidly looking for any problems or complications in any bill related to mental health so that we can promptly address and hopefully correct what needs to be changed.

Meetings Requested:

Orwall

Leavitt

Muzzall

## General Legislative News

Quick facts – 2023 session:

- 2011 bills were introduced in the House and Senate since the pre-file period opened on December 4, 2022.
- 1108 bills advanced from House and Senate policy committees prior to the February 17 cutoff deadline
- 368 bills advanced from House and Senate fiscal committees (Appropriations, Ways & Means, Transportation) prior to the February 24 cutoff deadline

As of today, there are 574 bills in House Rules, awaiting a potential pull to a floor vote; there are 298 bills in Senate Rules awaiting the same potential action.

Budget writers have communicated throughout the session that they do not plan on making significant spending cuts or increases, instead broadly asking about program efficacy and outcomes. This has seemed to cause many policy bills to get watered down to reduce the cost – or not advance at all. In March, the state economic and revenue forecast will be the final estimate of what fiscal flexibility and resources the budget committees and leadership will have to craft the final state budget proposals for the next two years. The chambers will release their budget proposals towards the end of March.

The central themes of this legislative session have remained consistent around previously passed police reform legislation, a permanent solution to drug possession laws due to the Supreme Court Blake decision, affordable housing via state-mandated residential zoning changes and permitting reform, maintaining K-12 funding mandated from the McCleary decision, and waste

management/extended producer responsibility legislation.

In this first in-person session since 2020, bills affecting these issue areas have continued to move through the process, with a relatively high degree of bipartisan collaboration that could reflect last November's elections. Democrats extended their majorities in both chambers of the legislature; At the same time, Republicans believed through the election cycle that they would have a chance to win a majority in the House – which did not turn out to be the case.

Of course, the last 55 days of the regular session will tell if these collaborations start to falter, as we are now seeing fissures between moderate, liberal, and progressive Democratic members starting to emerge.

Looking forward - session timeline

Wednesday, March 8 will be the next cutoff date for the session, known as the “House of Origin cutoff.” After that point, bills that have not been voted out of the chamber they were initially filed in will most likely be dead, except for bills that are ‘necessary to implement the budget.’ No bill is genuinely ever dead until the final adjournment of a session.

What's on the Horizon?

We are waiting for bills to be pulled from the Rules Committee and be scheduled for floor action. We will be working on amending the Compact bill to its original form in the Senate.

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

I am tracking all related behavioral health bills, attending coalition and stakeholder meetings as well as remaining in communication with lawmakers and their staff.

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