

Lobbyist Report

Month January



Meetings/Workgroups attended

January Appointments/Meetings

January 6 WMHCA - Legislative Committee

January 10 - Behavioral Health Lobbyist Coalition Meeting

January 17 - Representative Leavitt

January 18 - Counseling Compact Coalition Meeting

January 18 - Representative Simmons

January 20 - Senator Muzall

January 26 - Lobby Day Senator Dhingra, Rep. McEntire, Rep. Orwall, Rep. Klicker, Speaker Jinkins, Rep. Schmidt

All relative house and senate committee hearings and coalition meetings

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

Mental Health News

Since session began on January 10, over 650 bills have been introduced in the house, and 611 bills have been introduced in the Senate. With the policy cut-off on February 17 and the fiscal cut-off on February 24, we can anticipate hundreds more introduced and filed in the session.

Mental health is once again at the top of everyone's ticket, and several bills have already started moving through the process. WMHCA introduced the Mental Health Counseling Compact bill in the House and Senate. Both chambers have heard the bill, and it is currently scheduled for executive session in the Senate and has moved to the rules committee in the house. It has been exciting to be the lead on such a significant piece of legislation, and we are working closely with stakeholders and lawmakers to ensure this bill passes in 2023. Other areas of interest include Medicaid reimbursement rates, student debt, forgiveness, general reimbursement issues, behavior, health specialists, 988 advancements, and more. Please see our complete tracking list for the bills. We are currently following.

We held our first day on the hill on January 26. Members from WMHCA came to Olympia for meetings with multiple legislators, including speaker Laurie Jinkins and majority leader representative Joe Fitzgibbon. It was a successful day, and we encourage you to attend our virtual lobby day on February 2! Since we are in a long session, there might be an opportunity for another day on the hill, and we will keep you apprised of any details regarding that event. If you would like to meet with your legislator, virtually or in person, please do not hesitate to contact me, and I can arrange a meeting for you.

Meetings Requested

Upcoming Meetings

Rep. Alvarado

Rep. Dent

Rep. Entenman

Rep. Wilcox

Rep. Kloba

Requested Meetings

Rep. Slatter

Sen. Billig

Sen. Cleveland

Sen. Wagoner

Sen. Warnick

Rep. Orwall

General Legislative News

In general legislative news, while we are back in person, it has been quite a different atmosphere, with many new legislators, staff, and procedural changes on campus. There has been a learning curve for all, new and old, but generally; most are thankful we are back in-person person and no longer conducting business remotely. Legislators were limited in the previous years on how many bills they were able to introduce, which is why we are seeing an overwhelmingly large number of new bills so far this year. Everything from police reform to addressing the homeless and housing crisis, behavior, health, organized retail theft, and the environment is on the agenda for this session.

WMHCA has diligently worked over the interim, making connections and building relationships with lawmakers and their staff. We have become a resource for many regarding behavioral health policy. As a membership that works across the aisle, we have brought both sides together to agree on legislation and offer bipartisan support for bills that will positively impact the profession and those who utilize it. Please check our bill tracking list, as it is regularly updated, and things are moving quickly.

What's on the Horizon?

We are waiting for the House bill to be pulled from the Rules Committee and for the Senate Bill to be scheduled for executive action.

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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