First Friday Forum: State Legislative Updates

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2024 Legislative Session

Washington's legislature is in session until March 7th.

- This is a "short session" in the biennial legislative cycle
- Legislature will consider a supplemental biennial budget for July 2024 to June 2025
- Session is hybrid: remote testimony is allowed

Legislative Atmosphere

The Legislature is juggling many policy proposals despite this being a short session

- The 6 Initiatives heading for the ballot taking up air
- Rumors of tighter budget year
- Election year

Hot Topics

There have been hundreds of health & social service items proposed. Here are a few we're watching:

Issue	Bill #	Description	More Info
Immigrant health equity	(n/a) budget	Efforts to increase funding for Medicaid-like health coverage for undocumented immigrants for this July's program launch. Affordability gap study at HBE Strengthen 2023 budget investment.	https://nohla.org/immigrant_health_nohla_acrs_2401-2/
Protecting Preventive Services	HB 1957	Codifies the ACA preventive services requirements in state law. Reaction to lawsuit attacking federal preventive services law	*Braidwood v Becerra*, currently at 5th circuit.
Improving Maternal Health Outcomes	SB 5580	Expands income eligibility for Apple Health pregnancy/postpartum coverage to 210% FPL by Nov 2024 and other supportive maternity services.	Passed Senate with bipartisan support

Hot Topics, continued…

Issue	Bill #	Description	More Info
Keep Our Care Act	SB 5241/ HB 1263	Requires public process to determine if health entity consolidations reduce access to affordable quality care.	https://fairhealthprices.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Keep-Our-Care-Act-2024-fact-sheet.pdf
Prohibits surprise ambulance bills	HB 2285/ SB 5986	Prohibits surprise bills from ground ambulance rides as an out-of-network health service charge	https://fairhealthprices.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-Ground-Ambulance-Fact-Sheet.pdf
Oversight to control health care costs	HB 1508/ SB 5519	Strengthens the Health Care Cost Transparency Board	https://fairhealthprices.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/2024-HCCTB-Fact-Sheet.pdf
Creating license for interpreters & translators	SB 5995	Moves interpreter certification from DSHS to DOL license and requires WA state licensing by 2029	see also SB 5810: Expands the CBU for interpreter for DSHS, DCYF, or medical enrollees.

Additional topics…

Issue	Bill #	Description	More Info
Standardize Exchange Health Plans	HB 2361/ SB 6258	Phases in requirement that only standard plans be offered on Health Plan Finder	
LTC Resident Rights	HB 1859	Extends existing federal rights for nursing home residents to residents of assisted living facilities, adult family homes, and veterans' homes.	
Increasing access to free public school meals	HB 2058/ SB 5964	Requires public schools, charter schools, and tribal schools to provide breakfast and lunch each school day to any students at no charge beginning 2024-25 school year.	Expansion of HB 1527
Charity Care Residency Restrictions	SB 6257	Restricts definition of who is eligible to charity care to WA residents *NOTE: did not survive cut-off; however, ongoing discussions likely*	current guidance: https://doh.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2023-09/CharityCareISCC2301.pdf

Key Resources

Learn more about legislative proposals:

- Sign up for NoHLA updates: www.nohla.org
- Look up a bill by number or topic: https://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/
- How to participate in the legislative process: https://leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/Participating.aspx
- Governor Inslee's proposed 2024 budgets: https://ofm.wa.gov/budget/state-budgets/gov-inslees-proposed-2024-supplemental-budgets