

## **AAUW WA State Legislative Update 2/26/2021**

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Week 7**

Monday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> marked fiscal cutoff or the last day to pass bills out of fiscal committees (House Appropriations, Senate Ways & Means, and House and Senate Transportation). Lawmakers worked late and long hours on Zoom to discuss, amend, and pass bills out of committees.

The good news? Many of AAUW's legislative priorities are still moving forward! In fact, this week alone we are celebrating the passage of several bills in their first chamber:

- [HB 1009](#): Ensuring abortion coverage in student health care plans
- [SB 5183](#): Improving care for survivors of non-fatal strangulation
- [SB 5068](#): Extending Apple Health to pregnant persons through 12 months postpartum

These bills will now head to the opposite chamber for consideration! AAUW's remaining priorities have until March 9 to pass out of their respective houses of origin.

*With legislative session taking place online and over Zoom, there are more ways to engage on the issues you care about. [more about how to access the legislature remotely here](#) and get detailed information about [how to testify remotely here](#).*

### **Updates on AAUW's Legislative Priorities**

#### **Tax on extraordinary wealth from capital gains ([HB 1496/SB 5096](#))**

Last week, the Senate took an extraordinary vote to advance SB 5096, a proposal to tax extraordinary wealth from capital gains. This bill would put a new 7% tax on extraordinary wealth from capital gains. The first \$250,000 a year in capital gains would be exempt as would all real estate transactions. The revenues from the tax would be allocated to the Education Legacy Trust Account and a newly created Taxpayer Relief Account.

SB 5096 would be the most progressive reform to Washington's tax code in decades. It would also jumpstart Washington's economic recovery. According to [analysis from the Washington Budget & Policy Center](#), this proposal would generate nearly 20,000 new jobs each year, more than half of which would be in the private sector. Investments enabled by the tax would increase state GDP by nearly \$2 billion each year and increase consumer spending at small businesses by \$1.2 billion a year.

Taxing extraordinary profits from capital gains is a strong step for our economy and for economic justice. The Senate has until Tuesday, March 9 to pass the bill off the floor – supportive messages to Senators from constituents are incredibly helpful at this juncture in the legislative process.

### **Working Families Tax Credit ([HB 1297](#) / [SB 5387](#))**

The Working Families Tax Credit was passed out of House Appropriations in a remarkable 28-5 vote with 8 Republicans joining Democrats to support the bill. The House is expected to vote on the bill in the coming days. The Senate companion bill is no longer moving.

The Working Families Tax Credit would provide a \$500 annual cash payment to low- and moderate-income workers each year with an additional payment for children in the home. The tax credit would be available families who qualify for the EITC. It would also be available to immigrant families who file with an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN). This new cash benefit would reach 500,000 Washingtonians and a quarter of all Washington children. The tax credit is modeled off state-based Earned Income Tax Credits, which are some of the [most-studied and best-proven anti-poverty policies](#). You can learn more about the [Working Families Tax Credit from the Washington Budget and Policy Center here](#).

### **Fair Starts for Kids Act ([HB 1213](#)/[SB 5237](#))**

HB 1213 and SB 5237 are both in their respective Rules committees. HB 1213 has been pulled from Rules meaning it is ready for a floor vote while SB 5237 has been placed on second reading, a positive sign of progress. Both bills will require large, new investments in early learning. These bills aim to address Washington's child care crisis. Nearly 550,000 children in Washington state do not have access to child care [according to Child Care Aware](#). The Fair Start for Kids Act, HB 1213/SB 5237, looks to address years of underinvestment in early childhood education. This legislation would require substantial new investments in Washington's early learning system. The legislation addresses a range of investments related to early learning, including:

- Lower co-pays for Working Connections Child Care families (the state's child care subsidy program)
- Increased eligibility for Working Connections Child Care to families at or below 75% of state median income
- Expanded Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) eligibility
- Expansion of a statewide mental health consultation program

### **Improving Access to Paid Family and Medical Leave ([HB 1073](#) & [SB 5097](#))**

HB 1073 and SB 5097, two proposals to improve access to paid family and medical leave, are continuing to move forward. In House Appropriations, HB 1073 was further amended to narrow the bill. It now only addresses employees whose hours were reduced due to COVID-19 and are no longer able to meet the 820 hours worked requirement for PFML.

SB 5097 includes several progressive and much-needed policies to improve equitable access to the program. The bill expands the definition of family member to include chosen family and maintains job protection and health insurance continuation for workers using the leave – current protections are restricted to workers who qualify for the federal Family and Medical Leave Act. These protections would go into effect in July 2022. SB 5097 has been referred to Rules and is on second reading, a positive sign of forward progress.

### **Protecting Pregnant Patients Act ([SB 5140](#))**

Last week, SB 5140 was passed in the Senate in a 29-20 vote! This is huge and a great testament to the work of advocates like AAUW. The bill has been referred to House Health Care & Wellness and is awaiting a hearing. SB 5140 will ensure that health care providers can provide pregnant patients who are experiencing complications of pregnancy, miscarriage, or an ectopic pregnancy, the necessary care they need and that their health and lives are not placed at risk. The policy will ensure that providers are able to provide the appropriate standard of care treatment for their patients, without risk of retaliation by their employer. We have been attempting to get this policy passed for many years and are hopeful that this will be the year that we can get it across the finish line.

### **Abortion Coverage in Student Health Plans ([HB 1009](#))**

Victory! HB 1009 passed the House this week in a 57-40 vote! It now heads to the Senate for consideration. HB 1009, sponsored by Rep. My-Linh Thai, will require abortion coverage to student health care plans. [House Bill 1009](#) aims to extend the Reproductive Parity Act to student health plans. Under the RPA, health insurance plans in Washington providing coverage for maternity care must provide equivalent coverage for abortion services.

### **Removing proof of marriage in sexual assault cases ([SB 5177](#))**

There are no new updates on SB 5177, which passed the Senate last week in a unanimous vote. This is a powerful statement of support as the bill is now in the House Public Safety committee.

In Washington statute, the language “and not married to the perpetrator” is used through the law to define who is guilty of a sex offense. Due to this, marriage can be used as a legal defense for rape – creating a loophole allowing sex offenders from out of state to avoid registering in Washington. “Ours is one of only a handful of states where our inconsistency in legal language with other states has enabled certain sex offenders to avoid registration,” [said Senator Cleveland](#), the bill’s prime sponsor. “It’s time for our state to join the rest of the modern world and ensure that sex offenders from other states are registered in our state as well.” [SB 5177](#) will remove this horrific language from statute.

### **Improving care for survivors of non-fatal strangulation ([SB 5183](#))**

In a powerful 49-0 vote, SB 5183 also passed the Senate this week. The advocacy of so many, including AAUW, helped build strong support for this critical legislation. This bill directs the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy to develop practices that local communities may voluntarily use to create more access to forensic nurse examiners in cases of nonfatal strangulation assault. It also authorizes the Crime Victims Compensation Program to pay the forensic examination costs. This bill would help survivors of domestic violence to get more appropriate care for their injuries. With non-fatal strangulation, injuries may present after the assault or much later and may persist for months and even years post-assault. This bill will help provide new resources for expanding access to trained medical staff to provide appropriate care for these injuries.

### **Extending Apple Health to pregnant persons through 12 months postpartum ([SB 5068](#))**

Victory once more! SB 5068 passed the Senate in a unanimous vote on Thursday! This is a huge statement of support as the bill heads to the House for consideration. A strong coalition of advocates along with AAUW fought hard for this win!

SB 5068 will extend Medicaid coverage to 12 months postpartum. This policy passed last session with overwhelming support but was unfortunately vetoed by the governor due to the cost of the program, the emergence of the COVID crisis and the looming budgetary shortfall. Senator Randall has re-introduced the bill in 2021, with strong bi-partisan support. SB 5068 would extend postpartum Apple Health coverage from 60 days to 12 months, with the same eligibility standards as the current program (up to 198% FPL). It would also direct HCA to pursue a waiver to draw down federal matching funds. The Maternal Mortality Review Panel's [findings](#) that 30% of all pregnancy-related maternal deaths and the majority of suicides and accidental overdoses occur 43 to 365 days after delivery. There are significant racial [disparities](#) in maternal mortality rates, as well. American Indian and Alaska Native women are six to seven times as likely to die from a pregnancy related cause as white women.