

AAUW WA State Legislative Update 4/16/2021

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Week 14**

The countdown to sine die – the final day of legislative session – continues. After last week's whirlwind of bill victories, progress continues. In fact, HB 1009 and SB 5068, two of AAUW's legislative priorities, will be signed into law by Governor Inslee today, Friday, April 16th at 10 am. The bill signings can be watched live on [TVW](#).

Read more below about additional victories on AAUW's legislative priorities.

Updates on AAUW's Legislative Priorities

Tax on extraordinary wealth from capital gains ([SB 5096](#))

Senate Bill 5096 is scheduled for executive session in the House Finance Committee later this morning, Friday, April 16th. 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.

Working Families Tax Credit ([HB 1297](#))

Victory! The Working Families Tax Credit was passed out of the State Senate and has been concurred on in the House. It is now on its way to Governor Inslee for signature!

The final bill was amended in the Senate to change the benefit structure of the program. The amendment sets the minimum benefit at \$300 for workers without children and a maximum benefit of \$1,200 for workers with three or more children. Workers who qualify for the federal Earned Income Tax Credit will be covered by the new program. The benefit will 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](#))

There are no new updates on SB 5237 since it was passed out of the House on April 8th on a vote of 92-36. **The bill needs to go back to the Senate for concurrence.** The Fair Start for Kids Act will require historic, 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 legislation 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](#))

Both HB 1073 and SB 5097 have been passed in their respective opposite chambers! **HB 1073 has been concurred on by the House and is now headed to Governor Inslee for signature. SB 5097 still needs to be concurred on in the Senate.** HB 1073, which passed in a 29-29 vote in the Senate, addresses employees whose work hours were reduced due to COVID-19 and are no longer able to meet the 820 hours worked requirement to qualify for paid family and medical leave. SB 5097, which passed in a 55-42 vote in the House, expands the definition of family member for family leave to include chosen family – a critical change to ensure the leave is equitably accessible for LGBTQ+ and BIPOC communities.

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

The Protecting Patient Care Act passed the House in a 57-41 vote on March 24th. **The amended bill still needs to be concurred on by the Senate before heading to Governor Inslee's desk.** 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.

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

HB 1009 was voted out of the Senate in a 29-19 vote on April 6 and has now been delivered to Governor Inslee for signature! It is scheduled to be signed into law on Friday, April 16th. The bill has been signed by the House Speaker and will arrive at Governor Inslee's desk shortly. This legislation 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](#))

SB 5177 passed the House in a 97-1 vote on April 8 and is now headed to the Governor for his signature. 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](#))

SB 5183 passed in the House in a unanimous 98-0 vote on April 6! It still needs to be concurred by the Senate. 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. It passed the Senate unanimously.

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

SB 5068 passed the House in a 96-1 vote and will be signed into law this morning, April 16th, by Governor Inslee! 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. 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). 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. The new federal COVID relief package (the American Relief Plan Act) includes a five-year option for states to elect to extend postpartum coverage. Starting in April 2022 states will be able to receive federal matching funds at the standard match rate.

Keep Our Care Act ([SB 5335](#))

This bill was proposed to address the rapid series of hospital mergers across the state that could threaten access to reproductive, end-of-life, and gender-affirming health care. **The bill will not advance this session.** Advocates plan on working on the issue over the interim and coming back in 2022 with legislation to address this important issue.