

AAUW WA State Legislative Update 1/28/22

From: Nancy Sapiro – AAUW WA Lobbyist

Week 3

The clear highlight of this week was AAUW Lobby Day! it was great to see so many faces turning up on a Monday morning to learn more about AAUW priority issues and to lobby their legislators.

Did you miss virtual lobby day? With legislative session taking place online and over Zoom, there are more ways to engage on the issues you care about. You can find out more about [how to access the legislature remotely here](#) and [sign up to testify virtually here](#).

As we look out to next week, February 3 marks the first “cut-off” date, the date by which policy bills need to have passed out of their policy committee to receive further consideration. From February 3 to February 7 attention will shift to the fiscal committees, where costs of the policies will be considered. And then, we have only until February 15 for bills to pass off of the Senate and House floor. As each deadline passes, fewer and fewer bills make the “cut” and the number of bills considered by legislators begins to dramatically decrease.

AAUW-WA 2022 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

CALL TO ACTION! Keep Our Care Act – [SB 5688](#)/HB 1809, sponsored by Senator Randall and Rep Simmons respectively, would ensure that health entity mergers and acquisitions improve, rather than harm, access to affordable quality care. Our state has seen a proliferation of hospital mergers over the past 10 years, and they often have negatively impacted cost, quality and access to necessary health care, particularly access to reproductive and end of life e. SB 5688 would give the AG’s office the tools it needs to ensure that future health system mergers and other transactions improve access to care. Specifically, the bill would prohibit a health entity consolidation that diminishes access to affordable quality care and would ensure AG oversight of all mergers. It also would allow for community input through public notification of proposed consolidations and the opportunity for public input and comment.

UPDATE: The bill has hit a few roadblocks; committee staff have put the bill on the executive action list and then taken it off two times. We are working with leadership and the bill sponsor to try and get the bill moved out of its policy committee before the deadline of February 3. The coalition working on this effort, of which AAUW is a part, have sent out action alerts and generated an organizational sign on letter urging that the bill be voted out of committee.

All AAUW-WA members: Please call or email the key players who can move this bill forward. It needs to get out of committee by Thursday Feb 3rd.

Senate Law and Justice Committee: Dhingra, Trudeau, Padden, McCune, Honeyford, Kuderer, Pedersen, Salomon, Wagoner.

The Democratic Caucus Leadership: Billig, Pedersen, Rolfes, Dhingra, Saldana, Hasegawa.

You can find their contact information at <https://app.leg.wa.gov/rosters/>.

Creating programs to encourage sexual assault nurse examiner training – [HB 1621](#), sponsored by Rep. Mosbrucker, would require the Department of Health to establish a stipend program for licensed nurses training to become certified sexual assault nurse examiners (SANEs). The bill also requires DOH to establish a hospital grant program to increase access to certified SANEs for hospitals without sufficient access. [A sexual assault nurse examiner is a registered nurse specifically trained to provide evidentiary examinations of sexual assault victims. In addition to other services, SANEs provide medical assistance while also assessing, documenting, and preserving evidence for potential prosecutions.] HB 1621 is an attempt to address the acute problem of many counties not having SANE nurses available to offer services to sexual assault survivors.

UPDATE: HB 1621 will have a hearing in House Appropriations on February 1. [If you want to sign in as supportive of the bill, go here...](#) Then click on House and Appropriations for 2/1 and HB 1621.

Increasing the Availability of sexual assault nurse examiners education in rural and underserved communities – [HB 1622](#), also sponsored by Rep Mosbrucker, would require the WA State University College of Nursing to establish a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE) online and clinical training program, and a regional SANE leader pilot program. Of note, currently the only entity that offers SANE training in the state is Harborview Medical Center in Seattle.

UPDATE: The bill passed off of the House floor unanimously on January 26. It now moves to the Senate.

Creating Teaching Endorsements in Computer Science – [SB 5389](#), sponsored by Senator Wellman, was introduced in the 2021 legislative session. In 2021, the bill passed out of its policy committee but didn't move out of Senate Ways and Means. If the bill is to progress this session, there will need to be a public hearing in Ways and Means. The endorsement created by SB 5389 would allow current teachers to be qualified to teach computer science. These specialty endorsements will allow greater accessibility to computer science courses and skills to underserved communities.

UPDATE: The bill is in Ways and Means. A hearing date has not yet been set.

Concerning Protections and Services for Indigenous Persons who are Missing Murdered or Survivors of Human Trafficking – [HB 1571](#), sponsored by Rep Mosbrucker, builds off legislation passed both in 2017 and 2018, addressing the ongoing tragedy of missing and indigenous persons. Information provided during the public hearing indicates that the indigenous population of WA makes up less than 2% of the population while at same time accounting for almost 80% of the MIP in this state. HB 1517 would create new protections and services for missing and indigenous persons including changes to the duties and responsibilities of coroners and medical examiners; creation of grant programs, and changes to the duties of law enforcement.

UPDATE: HB 1571 passed out of Committee and has now been referred to the Appropriations Committee. As of this writing, no hearing date is scheduled.

Affirm WA Access to Abortion Act – [HB 1851](#) sponsored by Rep Thai, will ensure that qualified licensed health care providers can include abortion services in their practice. This legislation comes at a critical juncture when threats to abortion are intensifying across the country. Thirteen other states already recognize that certain advanced practice clinicians can safely and effectively provide abortion, and providers have already been doing so in Washington under the guidance of two Attorney General Opinions. Passing this legislation would remove legal ambiguity and ensure that providers are not unnecessarily prohibited from offering abortion care when it is within their existing scope of practice. The bill will also modernize the statute's language to be gender neutral and inclusive.

UPDATE: HB 1851 passed out of Health Care and has been referred to Rules.

Changes to the Paid Family Leave – [SB 5649](#), sponsored by Senator Robinson, will make improvements to our Paid Family and Medical Leave law by making it more compassionate and easier for workers, health care providers, and employers to utilize. The bill will: allow people to apply up to 45 days in advance of an expected leave; extend family caregiving leaves up to 14 days after the death of the family member for whom the worker was providing care, or after the death of a newborn or stillborn child; allow people to take medical leave during the first 6 weeks after giving birth without requiring additional medical certification. A public hearing was held on January 13 and advocates provided compelling testimony on the need for these changes.

UPDATE: The bill has been modified substantially. The Employment Security Department announced last week likely cash flow issues in the PFML trust fund in March or April, before the first quarter of payroll premiums come in at the end of April. They've asked for \$82 million to be made available from the state General Fund if they need funds to continue paying benefits in a timely manner. The trust fund issue undermined the possibility for bipartisan consensus on the modest PFML improvement bill as originally drafted. The new version cuts those improvements and creates new accountability measures, including an actuarial study and audit of the PFML program administration. Advocates continue to work to try to get the substantive policy elements back into the bill.

Providing Wage and Salary Information – [SB 5761](#), sponsored by Senator Randall, will expand upon current law, by requiring employers to disclose additional information in job postings. Specifically, when posting job openings, an employer would have to disclose the hourly or salary compensation, or a range of the compensation, and a general description of the benefits offered. The bill was heard in Senate Labor on January 17; it passed out of committee on a partisan vote on January 27.

UPDATE: The bill has not yet been referred to Appropriations.

Higher Education Affordability – [HB 1659](#), sponsored by Rep Slatter would make higher education more affordable and accessible for students. It expands the Washington College Grant (WCG) program by modifying the income eligibility thresholds and award levels. The bill

will also allow for an additional annual stipend for expenses beyond tuition and fees such as books, lab fees, supplies, technology, transportation, housing, and childcare.

UPDATE: The bill passed out of its policy committee on January 20 and is scheduled for public hearing in Appropriations on January 31.