

AAUW WA State Legislative Update 2/11/22

From: Nancy Sapiro – AAUW WA Lobbyist

Week 5

We have officially reached the half-way point of the 2022 legislative session. Legislators will spend the next 5 days on the floor, making key decisions about the bills that are before them. [If you'd like to watch floor activity, you can check out the schedule here.](#) They will be on the floor this weekend and could well be working late into the evenings. Come February 16, we start the process all over again – those bills that have successfully made their way through one chamber now must repeat the process in the other. We also are expecting the House and Senate to release their supplemental budget proposals soon, as an agreement on the supplemental budget must happen by March 10.

The updates below capture where AAUW's priority bills are as of February 11. All the bills below must pass out of their house of origin by February 15 to continue on in the process this session.

AAUW-WA 2022 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

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 came out of Appropriations on February 4 and is now ready to be taken up by the House.**

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 the House unanimously on January 26. It is now in the Senate and has been referred to the Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee.**

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 House Appropriations and is ready to be taken up by the House.**

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 is expected to be debated on the House floor February 11.**

Changes to the Paid Family Leave – [SB 5649](#), sponsored by Senator Robinson, will update the state's PFML statute by making the following improvements: allowing people to apply up to 45 days in advance of an expected leave; extending 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; allowing people to take medical leave during the first 6 weeks after giving birth without requiring additional medical certification; sunseting the temporary exemption of workers covered by a collective bargaining agreement; and making public the list of employers with approved Voluntary Plans. The bill was modified substantially in policy committee. The Employment Security Department announced 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 as they need funds to continuing 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 most of 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. **UPDATE: The bill is ready to be taken up by the Senate.**

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 passed out of the Senate on February 9 on a vote of 27-21 and now moves to the House.**

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 Appropriations and is now in Rules.**

AAUW PRIORITY BILLS THAT DID NOT ADVANCE THIS SESSION

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: Unfortunately, despite the tremendous efforts of advocates, including many AAUW members, SB 5688 did not pass out of the Senate Law and Justice Committee and therefore the bill will not be advancing this session.**

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. 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: There was no hearing on SB 5389 in Ways and Means before fiscal cut-off and the bill is therefore not advancing this session.**