

AAUW WA State Legislative Update 3/4/2022

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Week 8

It is hard to believe that there is only a week left in the 2022 legislative session. As legislators work around-the-clock to pass bills off the floor of the Senate and House, advocates are also hard at work to keep critical proposals moving toward the Governor's desk. Over the next 7 days, the House and Senate will work to reconcile their differences over policy bills and budget negotiations between members of the House and Senate will result in a final 2022 supplemental budget being adopted. All this work must be completed by the end of the day March 10.

As you can see, from the updates below, there is lots of good news. Many of AAUW's priorities are in a great place, thanks in no small part to your advocacy efforts!

AAUW-WA 2022 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

Increasing the Availability of sexual assault nurse examiners education in rural and underserved communities – [HB 1622](#), 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. The bill passed the House unanimously on January 26. **UPDATE: The bill passed from the Senate on March 3 on a vote of 47-0. It now heads to the Governor for his consideration.**

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. HB 1571 passed out of the House 98 to 0. **UPDATE: HB 1571 passed off the Senate floor 48 to 0. The bill needs to head back to the House for concurrence on an amendment made in the Senate and then it will head to the Governor for his consideration.**

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. HB 1851 passed out of the House on a vote of 55 to 40. Of note, the House added a Republican amendment which changed the gender-neutral language throughout the bill by inserting confusing gendered language that referred to "women and pregnant individuals" rather than just the term "pregnant individuals." The Senate Health Care committee removed this language from the bill, so that as it heads to the floor,

the bill only uses the term “pregnant individual” throughout. **UPDATE: The bill passed out of the Senate 28-21. It now heads back to the House so members can concur on the positive changes made by the Senate. Then off to the Governor!**

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; sunsetting 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. 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 passed the Senate on 42-7 vote, and it passed the House 96-2. It now goes to the Governor’s desk for his consideration.**

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. The bill passed out of the Senate on February 9. **UPDATE: SB 5761 passed off the House floor on March 1. It now goes back to the Senate for consideration of an amendment made in the House, which will delay the effective date.**

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. The bill came out of the House on a vote of 83-15. **UPDATE: The bill passed the Senate 38 to 10. The Senate made changes to the bill regarding the increases in the WA College Grants awards. These changes must be considered by the House before the bill can move on to the Governor for consideration.**