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Long-Term Care Advocates Applaud Senate’s Proposed Budget but Raise Concern about House Proposal

Senate proposed budget successfully protects long-term care residents and workers while House budget falls short

OLYMPIA – Advocates from skilled nursing and assisted living facilities at the Washington Health Care Association are applauding the Senate’s proposed budget but raising concerns about the House’s proposal and the risks it creates for vulnerable communities. While the Senate’s budget fulfills long-standing legal requirements to update Medicaid to coincide with wage growth, the House budget walks away from this obligation. Instead, it delays any increase in reimbursement rates keeping them consistent with outdated costs from 2022. Both budgets include the extension of critical funding to keep the doors open for 55 assisted living facilities that almost solely serve Medicaid residents.

“The Senate’s proposed budget successfully seeks to protect the elderly, the young and the most vulnerable populations in our communities,” said **Carma Matti-Jackson, CEO of the Washington Health Care Association**. “Unfortunately, the House’s proposed budget falls short and undermines long-term care workers and those who rely on Medicaid for important nursing, medications management and personal care support, in addition to food and shelter.”

Around the state, community leaders have continued to call on the legislature for increased Medicaid funding for long-term care facilities. **Cole Casarez and Dell Workman, employees at North Central Care Center Skilled Nursing Facility in Spokane**, urged the legislature to stabilize the state Medicaid funding model in their Spokesman-Review [guest editorial](#) last month: “Now is the time to increase investments to stabilize our workforce,” they wrote. “You don’t have to work in long-term care to know the painful realities of high inflation in recent years. The real costs for supporting patients with Medicaid exceed state funding by more than \$60 million per year across the 197 skilled nursing facilities in Washington. This threatens our state’s ability to lower barriers to accessing long-term care for those who need it.”

“Our state legislature has recognized that the state-funded Medicaid rates are wildly insufficient to maintain the number of [assisted living] facilities we need in our communities,” wrote **Stephanie Ober, Director of Resident Services at Sixth Avenue Senior Living Assisted Living Facility of Tacoma** in a [guest column](#) published by The News Tribune on Monday. “Long-term care communities like ours provide stability and preventative healthcare that breaks the cycle of over-reliance on emergency rooms and crisis centers.”

The **Editorial Board of The Everett Herald** also highlighted the need for a sustainable investment in long-term care in their [editorial](#) published in February: “While state lawmakers in [recent years have addressed concerns](#) that improved pay for those providing care — in particular at skilled nursing facilities and assisted-living centers — that need has been largely met in piecemeal fashion, dependent on renewals, rather than a sustainable, long-term commitment to providing well-funded care.”

Information on these two types of long-term care:

[Facts on Assisted Living](#)

Assisted Living provides 24/7 supervision that includes housekeeping, daily personal care, intermittent nursing, medication assistance, social activities, transportation support and meals. Those in Assisted Living often live in private apartments. Older adults in Assisted Living are:

- 30% are 74-84 years old, 55% are 85+
- 85% require medication assistance (avg. of 12-15 daily medications)
- 54% have Alzheimer's/dementia
- 72% identify as female
- 18.8% rely on Medicaid (access is low due to insufficient state investment in Medicaid)
 - o Private pay rates are increasing in order to subsidize low state Medicaid investments

Skilled Nursing Facilities

Skilled Nursing Facilities provide post-surgery therapies, transportation for on-going treatments (e.g. chemotherapy, dialysis), care for intense needs related to chronic medical treatment, diet

- (liquid, soft, tube), complex wound care, bowel/bladder programs, oxygen therapies and condition management (e.g. cancer, kidney failure, tracheotomy). Adults in Skilled Nursing Facilities are:
- 77 years old, on average
- 59% have moderate/high cognitive impairment, 42% diagnosed with Alzheimer's/dementia
- 32% are obese, 85% are bladder incontinent, 70% are bowel incontinent, 75% have hypertension and 28% have congestive heart failure
- 17% are bedfast
- 7,800 residents rely on Medicaid

About Washington Health Care Association

Washington Health Care Association is a nonprofit professional association for the long-term care community in Washington, representing 156 Skilled Nursing and 404 Assisted Living providers across the state. In partnership with these member facilities and business partners, WHCA promotes and advocates for healthy, affordable and ethical long-term care at the state and federal levels. For more information, please visit whca.org.

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