

Washington Health Care Association Legislative Priorities 2026 Session

Critical: Governor's Budget

HB 2289 / SB 5998 Our View: **OPPOSE**

Since its release on December 23rd, 2025, **WHCA has been strongly opposed to Governor Ferguson's supplemental budget proposal and the impact it would have on long-term care.** In the proposal, Governor Ferguson cuts nearly 150 million dollars in critical Medicaid funding for **skilled nursing** (SNFs) and **assisted living** (AL) facilities. These cuts put AL and SNF providers, those they employ, and those they care for at risk. **We cannot support a proposal that looks to fill budget holes by cutting critical services that protect Washington's seniors.**

This leaves facilities and quality care delivery operating within a reimbursement system that is tied to 2022 costs reports for another year. This, when viewed in conjunction to raising inflation, progressive wage increases, and the cost of doing business in Washington, is an unsustainable reality for those who uplift and protect our most vulnerable seniors, especially those in SNF settings who are older adults with higher acuity; those who often need to be transitioned out of hospitals for the sake of the continuum of care.

For WHCA and its members, the facts are clear:

- Medicaid currently underfunds registered nurse and frontline worker wages by up to \$13 per hour in our sector.
- Medicaid rates are based on 2022 wages; reimbursement is \$5.80 an hour below actual NAC wages and \$1.47 an hour below the Seattle minimum wage.

Failing to fund a rate update sends a clear message that the care of low-income individuals who need skilled nursing and assisted living is undervalued - despite these facilities serving an essential role in Washington's health care system.

We are considering the real-world impact:

- Assisted living providers prevent homelessness for approximately 8,000 Medicaid-supported residents.
- At the same time, Washington's population aged 85 and older is projected to quadruple in the coming years.
- Demand for skilled nursing and assisted living care is rising rapidly, and this proposal ignores the concerns many families face. If providers are forced to close because they can't compete for staff under inadequate reimbursement rates, where will Washington's families turn for care?
- SNFs take in almost 50,000 transfers from hospitals annually.

Primary Legislation

Delaying Nursing Home Rebase

HB 1476 / SB 5407 Our View: **OPPOSE**

This bill enacts terrible cuts to skilled nursing facility care. It proposes a delay to the July 1, 2026, rate increase to 2024 cost reporting until 2028.

Nurse Delegation

HB 2425 / SB 6107 Our View: **PRO**

Expands nurse delegation authority from home and community-based care to all health care settings, including skilled nursing facilities. A common sense step to improve care delivery and workforce flexibility.

Independent Living Ombuds

HB 2299 / SB 5964 Our View: **CONCERNS**

Well-intentioned support for seniors whose rental agreements fall under the Residential Landlord Tenant Act rather than LTC Residents Rights statute, but lacks foundational framework describing rights of tenants in independent senior housing; needs additional, thoughtful stakeholder work.

SNF & Rehab Network Adequacy

SSB 5124 Our View: **PRO**

Establishing network adequacy standards for SNFs and rehabilitation hospitals to address ongoing problems with managed care organizations, including inconsistent service denials and lack of timely payments.

Aligning DSHS Terminology

HB 2468 / SB 6063 Our View: **PRO**

Updates statutory references to certain administrations within DSHS.

Enacting an Excise Tax on Payroll

SB 6093 / HB 2100 Our View: **OPPOSE**

Creates additional, unreimbursed expenses for Washington providers serving state Medicaid clients whose reimbursement rates are based on 2022 costs.



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