

## Weekly Legislative Update: **Behavioral Healthcare**

Issue Team Chair: Mary Lynne Courtney

Contact: [mcourtney@lwvwa.org](mailto:mcourtney@lwvwa.org)

**January 28, 2024**

### Bills Needing Action This Week

*Remember, only authorized members can speak for the League; the Issue Chairs will do that, so **please leave the "Organization" box blank**. A more powerful influence is many voices speaking for themselves rather than many voices speaking for the League.*

Sign in **PRO** for the following bill this week:

**SB 5853 Extending the crisis relief center model to provide behavioral health crisis services for minors.** This expands the services of crisis relief centers to adolescents, individuals 13 to 18. Adolescent services would be separate from adult services. This is much needed and an essential component of the continuum of behavioral health services for adolescents. The bill is currently in the Senate Ways & Means Committee. Help move it along.

**⚠ Please sign in PRO on SB 5853 [HERE](#) by 3:00 PM on Friday, February 2.**

### Bills We Support

**HB 1881/SB 5821 Establishing a uniform standard for creating an established relationship for the purposes of coverage of audio-only telemedicine services.** This bill establishes a uniform standard for audio only telemedicine services by expanding the time period in which a healthcare provider has seen the patient in person or a through video and audio telemedicine appointment. It also removes the expiration date for real-time interactive patient appointments using both audio and video technology.

**HB 1889 Allowing persons to receive professional licenses and certifications regardless of immigration or citizenship status.** This bill removes citizenship requirements for professional licensure, but all other requirements must be met. This would help address workforce shortage issues.

**HB 1929/SB 6050 Supporting young adults following inpatient behavioral health treatment.** Provides supportive transitional housing for young adults (18-24) exiting inpatient behavioral health treatment. The focus is on securing long-term housing.

**HB 1939 Adopting the social work licensure compact.** This bill provides for Washington State to join a Social Work Licensure Compact. The Compact would allow licensed social workers to

practice across state lines under a Compact privilege. This would help address workforce shortage issues.

**HB 1946 Creating the Washington health corps behavioral health scholarship program.**

**HB 2145 Concerning medically necessary treatment of a mental health or substance use disorder.** Requires that insurance covering hospital, medical, or surgical services must also cover mental health and substance use disorders.

**HB 2239 Supports student well-being through instruction in social-emotional skills.**

**HB 2245 Establishing co-response services and training as an essential component of the crisis continuum.** This bill provides for the development of a training program for co-responders as part of a comprehensive crisis response system.

**HB 2247 Addressing behavioral health provider shortages.** Establishes a new category of provider, Licensed Psychological Associate, for students pursuing a doctorate in clinical psychology. They may practice only under the supervision of a licensed psychologist. This would help address workforce shortage issues.

**SB 5853 Extending the crisis relief center model to provide behavioral health crisis services for minors.** This expands the services of crisis relief centers to adolescents, individuals 13 to 18. Adolescent services would be separate from adult services.

**SB 5966 Concerning restraint or isolation of students in public schools and educational programs.** Prohibits restraint and isolation of public school students the student's behavior poses an imminent risk of serious harm to the student or to other. In that case the restraint or insolation must end immediately as soon as there is no longer a risk of serious harm. The bill also establishes reporting requirements for these types of incidents.

**SB 6144 Establishing a prescribing psychologist certification in Washington state.** Extends prescribing privileges to psychologists with special training and supervised experience in prescribing medication. This would help address workforce shortage issues.

## **Bills We Are Watching**

**SB 5866 Protecting the continuity of teletherapy services.** This bill requires that organizations providing telehealth services give providers six months' notice prior to cancellation of these services.

## **Bills We Oppose**

**HB 2241 Prohibiting puberty blocking medication, cross-sex hormones, and gender transition surgeries for minors.** The League supports access to healthcare for all. This is most appropriately a decision to be made by the minor and their parents in consultation with a physician and other healthcare providers.

## How You Can Be Involved

- Local Leagues in Washington have action chairs who coordinate action teams. Some local Leagues have health care teams to take action locally. Contact your local League action chair to find out and join.
- You may also express your opinion on legislation with the LWVWA issue chairs. We will take your perspectives into consideration as we determine our support for legislation and prepare testimony. Send them to **Mary Lynne Courtney**, Behavioral Health Issue Chair.
- Another way to be involved is to join the Healthcare Affinity Group meetings on Zoom. The group meets every six weeks during the legislative session. If you are interested, please email **Kim Abbey** for the date of the next meeting and a link to attend.