

WSLHA Priorities

One of WSLHA's legislative priorities in 2026 is [HB 1589/SB 5588](#), our legislation from the 2025 session regarding provider contracting. These bills require insurance companies to negotiate in good faith with health care providers. Both bills remain alive for the 2026 session.

WSLHA will also prioritize legislation that limits overpayment recovery by insurers to six months, instead of the current two years. Unexpected, years-old repayment demands can destabilize clinic budgets and threaten access to care. This bill seeks to protect patient access, ensure financial stability for health care providers, and bring fairness and predictability to our insurance market. We should have a bill number this week.

General News

The 2026 legislative session of the Washington State Legislature officially begins on Monday, marking the start of the 60-day short session that will shape state policy through mid-March. Lawmakers from both chambers will reconvene in Olympia after a period of pre-session preparation that included the pre-filing of bills on a wide range of issues, from health care policy to education proposals and housing priorities.

As the Legislature returns to work, Democratic and Republican leaders have begun articulating their priorities against the backdrop of the \$2.3 billion deficit, debates over taxes, affordability, and supplemental budget reductions.

Governor Ferguson released the first budget of his administration (he inherited Governor Inslee's budget last year) on December 23rd. His proposal does not rely on new taxes to close the budget deficit. Instead, the budget employs:

- About \$800 million in targeted spending reductions and administrative efficiencies.
- Roughly \$425 million in reallocation of existing funds within state accounts.
- Approximately \$1 billion from the state's Budget Stabilization Account (rainy-day fund).

Governor Ferguson has also indicated support for a future tax on high-income earners ("millionaires' tax"), but this is not part of his supplemental budget proposal and would not generate revenue until years later if enacted.

The legislative fiscal committees will hold hearings on the Governor's supplemental budget early this week. Then lawmakers will draft their own versions of the budget, with the goal of negotiating a final balanced budget by the end of the 60-day session.