Capitol News

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# WSLHA Priorities

Good news! [HB 1001](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1001&Initiative=false&Year=2023), the Audiologist/Speech-Language Pathologist **licensure compact** bill, passed the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee unanimously on Tuesday. It’s now in the Rules Committee.

More good news on [HB 1222](https://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2023-24/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/1222.pdf?q=20230115205537), legislation that mandates large group insurance plan coverage (employers with more than 50 employees) for **hearing instruments and the services** necessary to fit them. This bill passed the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee unanimously on Thursday. It is also in the Rules Committee now.

[HB 1508](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1508&Chamber=House&Year=2023) is legislation regarding the **Health Care Cost Transparency Board**. It was heard in the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee on Friday. Work continues on amendments that further define an exemption from the bill for smaller practices. The Washington State Hospital Association (WSHA) and the Washington State Medical Association (WSMA) are negotiating with the proponents of the bill but currently remain opposed.

The Legislature is considering several bills dealing with **special education funding**.

* [HB 1436](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1436&Initiative=false&Year=2023) is OSPI-request legislation that would **lift the special education cap** by the 2027-28 school year. It looks SB 5311 has been chosen as the legislative vehicle for special education funding. As a result, HB 1436 may not move forward this session.
* [SB 5311](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=5311&Initiative=false&Year=2023) is Governor-request legislation. It **increases special education cost multipliers** over a 4-year period and increases the funding cap to 15%. It is scheduled for executive session on Monday.
* [HB 1109](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1109&Initiative=false&Year=2023) increases the **reimbursement for initial evaluations and IEPs** during the summers of 2023, 2023, and 2025. It is scheduled for executive session on Monday.

[HB 1565](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1565&Year=2023&Initiative=false) addresses professional education workforce recruitment and retention, including the **Beginning Educator Support Team (BEST)** program. This bill was heard on Monday in the Senate Early Learning & K12 Committee.

[HB 1479](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1479&Year=2023&Initiative=false) related **to restraint and isolation of students** is being heard in the Senate Early Learning & K12 Committee on Monday.

# General News

With about one month left in the legislative session, committees were back in swing last week hearing bills from the opposite chamber. Cutoff deadlines are coming fast though; bills must pass their policy committees by March 29th, and their fiscal committees by April 4th to remain alive.

This week will be all about the budget. The week will kick off with the release of the state’s revenue forecast on Monday. Legislators will use this forecast to make changes, either positive or negative, on their budgets. For several weeks, some lawmakers have advised advocates to lower expectations in terms of the budget, noting that the last two years of unprecedented budget growth is coming to an end.

The Senate capital budget will be released on Monday, with a hearing the same day. Thursday will see the release of the Senate operating budget, with a hearing on Friday afternoon. We expect the House budgets out the following week. Once each chamber has passed its own budget, negotiations between the House and Senate will begin, with the goal of passing a final, agreed-to budget by April 23rd, the last day of session.

The House Education Committee considered several Senate bills last week that would implement new curricula in the state’s public K-12 schools. On Monday, the committee heard SB 5626, a bill that would expand the capability of school districts to integrate media literacy and digital citizenship into various subject areas. Supporters say that as technology becomes more prevalent, students must learn how to safely, ethically, and responsibly, use technology. The bill passed the Senate 44-4 with strong bipartisan support.

Also on Monday, the committee heard SB 5462 which among other elements updates state learning standards at all grade levels to include the histories, contributions, and perspectives of LGBTQ people. This bill did not enjoy bipartisan support on the Senate floor, passing 29-19, with Republicans stressing local control. And on Thursday, the committee heard SB 5355 which requires school districts to provide instruction on sex trafficking prevention at least once between grades 7 and 12. Washington state is the sixth-largest area for sex trafficking in the country, and over 45% of victims are minors in K-12 schools. This bill passed the Senate unanimously.