Capitol News

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# WSLHA Priorities

[HB 1001](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1001&Initiative=false&Year=2023), the Audiologist/Speech-Language Pathologist **licensure compact** bill, is out of the Rules Committee and is **now eligible for a vote by the Senate**!

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 is also out of the Rules Committee and is **now eligible for a vote by the Senate**!

[HB 1508](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1508&Chamber=House&Year=2023) is legislation regarding the **Health Care Cost Transparency Board.** Its legislative future remains unclear. It has not been scheduled for a vote out of the Senate Health & Long Term Care Committee yet, and the cutoff deadline for that vote is Wednesday.

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. This bill is scheduled for executive session on Monday in the Senate Early Learning & K12 Committee. **However, it is being amended to remove the current special education cap language and replace it with the following:**
  + Directs OSPI to annually review data to ensure there is not a disproportionate identification of students;
  + Requires OSPI to provide technical assistance to school districts experiencing issues related to disproportionality and make professional development opportunities available to promote inclusionary teaching practices; and
  + Requires JLARC and the State Auditor to conduct a performance audit of the state's system of providing special education.
* [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 passed the House Education Committee on Monday and has been referred to the House Appropriations Committee.
* [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 passed the Senate Early Learning & K12 Committee on Monday. It is scheduled for a hearing in the Senate Ways & Means Committee on Tuesday.

[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 passed the Senate Early Learning & K12 Committee on Wednesday and is now in the Senate Ways & Means Committee. No hearing scheduled yet.

[HB 1479](https://app.leg.wa.gov/billsummary?BillNumber=1479&Year=2023&Initiative=false) related **to restraint and isolation of students** was heard in the Senate Early Learning & K12 Committee on Monday. No executive session scheduled yet.

# General News

On Monday, the state’s revenue forecast showed a slowdown in the state’s economic activity due to lower-than-expected real estate excise tax collections and personal income, combined with higher interest rates. The forecast showed a revenue reduction of about $1 billion over the next four years. This wasn’t a surprise to budget writers, however, who had been telegraphing this downturn for much of the session.

On Monday, Senate budget leaders proposed their two-year capital budget. Capital budget highlights include funding to increase behavioral health provider capacity; funding for early learning and K12 construction; and a historic $400 million investment in the Housing Trust Fund. Notably, the proposal did not include Governor Inslee’s $4 billion housing bond. The Senate passed this budget on Friday with a unanimous vote.

The Senate’s $69.2 billion operating budget was released on Thursday, with a hearing on Friday. The two-year operating budget adds roughly $5.1 billion in new spending and does not rely on any new general taxes or fees. It leaves $3.8 billion in reserves. Highlights include an increase in behavioral health provider rates; additional investments in early learning and K12 special education; funding for emergency housing and rental assistance; and investments in law enforcement training.

On Friday morning, legislative Democrats received much anticipated good news for their budgets when the Washington State Supreme Court upheld the constitutionality of the capital gains tax in *Quinn v. State of Washington.* The 2021 law applies a 7% tax to capital gains profits over $250,000 with proceeds to go to early childhood education programs.

House budgets will be released on Monday, with a hearing on the operating budget that same day. Once both chambers pass their respective budgets, work turns to negotiating final budget agreements.

**Upcoming Dates**

March 29 - Policy committee cutoff - opposite house

April 4 - Fiscal committee cutoff - opposite house

April 12 - Floor cutoff - opposite house

April 23 - Sine Die