



Washington State Catholic Conference

The Public Policy Voice of the Bishops of Washington State

2022 Bill Summaries

Below are summaries of bills discussed in the Catholic Advocacy Bulletin during the 2022 legislative session. Bills are listed numerically.

Improving WA's Climate Change Response

[House Bill 1099](#) (HB 1099)

HB 1099 improves the state's climate response through updates to the Growth Management Act, the state's comprehensive planning framework. Cities and counties will upgrade their land use and transportation planning to reduce greenhouse emissions. Additionally, this bill embeds a definition for environmental justice into the Growth Management Act. Environmental justice is defined as the fair treatment and meaningful involvement of all people, regardless of race, color, national origin, or income with respect to development, implementation, and enforcement of environmental laws, regulations, and policies. This bill is in line with the bishops' legislative priority to Care for God's Creation, and the WSSC supports HB 1099.

Modifying Legal Financial Obligations (LFOs)

[House Bill 1412](#) (HB 1412)

HB 1412 modifies legal financial obligations (LFOs). When a defendant is convicted of a crime, the court may impose legal financial obligations as part of its judgment and sentence. Examples of LFOs include victim restitution, crime victims' compensation fees, and costs associated with the offender's prosecution and sentence. Because formerly incarcerated individuals are often impoverished, it is difficult to pay LFOs. HB 1412 sets a standard of indigency to determine if offenders have an inability to pay for LFOs. The bill also allows courts to not impose restitution or to waive full or partial restitution if an offender does not have the current or likely future ability to pay LFOs. In line with the bishops' restorative justice and economic justice legislative priorities, the WSSC supports HB 1412.

Expanding the Charity Care Act

[House Bill 1616](#) (HB 1616)

HB 1616 increases the number of individuals eligible for charity care at hospitals. In accordance with the bishops' hospitals and health care and economic justice legislative priorities, the WSSC supports the Charity Care Act.

Exempting Affordable Housing from the Real Estate Excise Tax

[House Bill 1643](#) (HB 1643)

HB 1643 will exempt the sale or transfer of property to a nonprofit, housing authority, public corporation, county, or municipal corporation from the real estate excise tax if the grantee intends to use the property for rental housing for low-income persons. Identify your district, your senator, and your senator's contact information [here](#). In line with the bishops' affordable housing legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 1643.

Dementia Action Collaborative

[House Bill 1646](#) (HB 1646)

By the year 2025, it is expected that there will be 140,000 Washingtonians living with Alzheimer's disease or another form of dementia. The Dementia Action Collaborative was first established in 2014, and HB 1646 ensures that its work continues. The Dementia Action Collaborative will assess services and resources for persons with Alzheimer's disease and other dementias and their families and caregivers, examine strategies to rectify disparate effects on people of color, and develop a strategy for a state response to this public health crisis. The Dementia Action Collaborative will also review and revise the Washington State Alzheimer's Plan. Per the bishops' legislative priority of caring for the aging and those with disabilities, the WSCC supports HB 1646.

Closing the Digital Equity Divide

[House Bill 1723](#) (HB 1723)

Our society is increasingly dependent on digital connectivity. However, many residents living in rural or underserved areas or of modest income do not have access to quality broadband internet service. HB 1723 provides low-income individuals with reduced rates for eligible voice and broadband services. It also provides discounted rates for telecommunications services and infrastructure costs to institutions such as public schools, libraries, early learning centers, homelessness shelters, community centers, and other nonprofit or governmental community support organizations. On January 27 WSCC Executive Director, Mario Villanueva, testified in support of HB 1723. View his testimony [here](#). In accordance with the bishops' economic justice legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 1723.

Housing Opportunities for People with Disabling Conditions

[House Bill 1724](#) (HB 1724)

HB 1724 creates a permanent supportive housing advisory committee that will provide advice, recommendations, stakeholder engagement, and oversight of resource coordination to bring high quality, permanent, supportive housing to scale for individuals with disabling conditions. In line with the WSCC's legislative priorities of affordable housing and caring for the aging and those with disabilities, the WSCC supports HB 1724.

Endangered Missing Person Advisory Designation for Indigenous Persons

[House Bill 1725](#) (HB 1725)

HB 1725 creates an endangered missing person advisory designation for missing indigenous persons. Indigenous people experience disproportionate rates of violence in Washington state. To address the crisis of missing and murdered indigenous people, HB 1725 creates a special alert for missing indigenous women and persons. This alert is akin to amber alerts designated for missing children. In accordance with the legislative priority to respect the dignity of life, the WSCC supports HB 1725.

Eligibility Of Victims of Human Trafficking for Assistance Programs

[House Bill 1748](#) (HB 1748)

HB 1748 assists victims of human trafficking by establishing their eligibility for the Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) program and the Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD) program. HEN and ABD provide cash assistance to eligible individuals in need. This bill is in line with the bishops' legislative priority of respecting life, and the WSCC supports HB 1748.

Tribal Consultation and the Climate Commitment Act

[House Bill 1753](#) (HB 1753)

Under HB 1753, state agencies must offer early, meaningful, and individual consultation with any federally recognized tribes affected by Climate Commitment Act programs that may impact tribal resources such as tribal cultural resources, fisheries, and archaeological sites. In accordance with the bishops' legislative priorities to respect the life and dignity of all and to care for God's creation, the WSCC supports HB 1753.

TANF Time Limit Extensions

[House Bill 1755](#) (HB 1755)

HB 1755 extends the time limits of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program. TANF provides temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for low-income families. There is a five-year time limit to receiving TANF. HB 1755 extends the time limits of this program to account for hardship experienced during the pandemic. The extension goes into effect when the state unemployment rate is 7% or higher. In accordance with the bishops' economic justice legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 1755.

Solitary Confinement Restriction Act

[House Bill 1756](#) (HB 1756)

Solitary confinement can have devastating and inhumane effects on incarcerated individuals. Those placed in prolonged solitary confinement have higher rates of medical conditions, shorter life expectancy, and higher recidivism rates. Solitary confinement is also disproportionately imposed on Black, Indigenous, and Hispanic individuals. The United Nations defines solitary confinement of 15 days or more as torture. HB 1756 limits the use of solitary confinement. WSCC executive director, Mario Villanueva, testified in support of this bill. View his testimony [here](#). In accordance with the bishops' restorative justice legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 1756.

Access and Representation For Individuals With Disabilities

[House Bill 1802](#) (HB 1802)

HB 1802 increases access and representation in policy-making for individuals with disabilities. The WSCC supports HB 1802, as it is in line with the bishops' legislative priority of caring for the aging and those with disabilities.

Electronic Enrollment System For the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program

[House Bill 1833](#) (HB 1833)

HB 1833 creates a statewide electronic system for enrollment in the National School Lunch Program and the School Breakfast Program. The electronic system created by HB 1833 will determine students' eligibility for free and reduced-price meals in lunch and school breakfast programs. This will increase program participation by families in need. It will also ease schools' applications for schoolwide free meals; entire schools are eligible for free meals when at least

40% of its students are eligible for free lunch and breakfast programs. In accordance with the bishops' legislative priorities of economic justice and supporting children and families, the WSCC supports HB 1833.

Study: Understanding the Needs Of Farmworkers

[House Bill 1847](#) (HB 1847)

HB 1847 aims to assess the needs of farmworkers in Washington state. Washington is one of the largest exporters of food and agricultural goods in the country, and farmworkers play a vital role. HB 1847 establishes a study to assess the needs of farmworkers, focusing on health and safety in the workplace; wages, nonpayment, and wage theft; and preventing harassment and discrimination. The study will inform future policy and assess current programs, policies, and statutes. Related to the bishops' two legislative priorities of racial justice and the dignity of work and the rights of workers, the WSCC supports HB 1847.

Expansion Of Abortion

[House Bill 1851](#) (HB 1851)

HB 1851 expands who may perform abortions. A physician would no longer be required to perform the procedure, and physician assistants, nurse practitioners, and other health care providers would be authorized to perform abortions. Additionally, under HB 1851 the state is prohibited from taking action against an individual for having an abortion. The state is also prohibited from taking action against someone who aids or assists a pregnant woman with getting an abortion. Language in the bill is changed from "woman" to "pregnant individual." WSCC staff testified against HB 1851, and video may be viewed [here](#) and [here](#). In line with the bishops' legislative priority to respect the dignity of every human being from conception to natural death, the WSCC opposes HB 1851.

Preventing Homelessness Among Persons Discharged from Behavioral Health Settings

[House Bill 1860](#) (HB 1860)

HB 1860 prevents homelessness among persons discharged from behavioral health settings. Per HB 1860, when the Health Care Authority contracts with a Managed Care Organization, the Managed Care Organization will be required to provide housing-related care coordination services for enrollees who are discharged from inpatient behavioral health settings. Discharge is a pivotal point in a person's treatment or recovery, and stable housing is a necessity to continued successful treatment and good health. In accordance with the bishops' legislative priority focusing on health care, the WSCC supports HB 1860.

Helping Medicaid Recipients Receive Housing and Community Supports

[House Bill 1866](#) (HB 1866)

HB 1866 establishes the Apple Health and Homes Program, which will provide a supportive housing benefit and community support services to low-income individuals who have medical risk factors and encounter barriers to finding stable housing. In line with the bishops' health care and affordable housing legislative priorities, the WSCC supports HB 1866.

Improving the Working Families Tax Credit

[House Bill 1888](#) (HB 1888)

In 2021 the legislature voted to fund the Working Families Tax Credit, a tax credit that assists low-income, working individuals and families. The Working Families Tax Credit addresses Washington's regressive tax system, which causes low-income Washingtonians to pay a higher

percentage of their household income in comparison to wealthier residents. HB 1888 improves the Working Families Tax Credit by aligning rates with federal maximum qualifying income levels. In accordance with the bishops' legislative priority of economic justice, the WSCC supports HB 1888.

Pass Tenant Protections From Excessive Rent and Related Fees

[House Bill 1904](#) (1904)

Provisions of HB 1904 include requiring landlords to provide at least 180 to 220 days' notice for rent increases over 3 percent, allowing a tenant to terminate a tenancy for any rent increase over 3 percent, and limiting late fees to 1.5 percent of the tenant's monthly rent. In line with the bishops' affordable housing and economic justice legislative priorities, the WSCC supports HB 1904.

Reducing Youth and Young Adult Homelessness

[House Bill 1905](#) (HB 1905)

HB 1905 establishes a rapid response team to support youth and young adults exiting publicly funded care, including the child welfare system, behavioral health system, juvenile justice system, and programs administered by the Office of Homeless Youth Prevention and Protection Program. Young individuals exiting these programs are at a high risk for experiencing homelessness. In line with the bishops' children and families and affordable housing legislative priorities, the WSCC supports HB 1905.

Using Surplus Public Property for Affordable Housing

[House Bill 1908](#) (HB 1908)

HB 1908 permits the use of surplus public property for affordable housing. In line with the bishops' affordable housing legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 1908.

Diaper Subsidies For TANF Recipients

[House Bill 1947](#) (HB 1947), [Senate Bill 5838](#) (SB 5838)

TANF provides temporary cash assistance, subsidized childcare, and work programs for low-income households with children. HB 1947 and SB 5838 authorize additional monthly payments to TANF recipients with children under the age of three to cover child-related necessities such as diapers. Aleah Patulot, director of Pregnancy and Parenting Support (PREPARES) for Catholic Community Services of Western Washington, testified at the January 21 Senate hearing for SB 5838. In line with the bishops' children and families and economic justice legislative priorities, the WSCC supports HB 1947 and SB 5838.

Evergreen Basic Income Trust

[House Bill 2009](#) (HB 2009)

As wages fail to keep pace with the cost of living and with the intent of ensuring economic sustainability for families, HB 2009 creates the Evergreen Basic Income Trust. The Evergreen Basic Income Trust will provide 36 months of cash assistance to approved applicants earning less than 50% of the area median income, as determined by the US Department of Housing and Urban Development's annually adjusted home income limits. Cash assistance will be equal to the fair market rent for a two-bedroom home in the applicant's zip code. Prioritized applicants to the program will include the lowest income households and key populations such as young adults aging out of foster care, young adults experiencing homelessness, and adults who were

formerly incarcerated. In accordance with the bishops' legislative priorities of economic justice and affordable housing, the WSCC supports HB 2009.

Housing Justice Act

[House Bill 2017](#) (HB 2017)

HB 2017 restricts the use of a conviction history as a reason to deny housing. Conviction histories or having been incarcerated puts individuals and their families at increased risk for housing instability and homelessness. Formerly incarcerated individuals are ten times more likely to experience homelessness. Additionally, stable housing for those who have been formerly incarcerated is a key factor in reducing recidivism. In line with the bishops' restorative justice priority, the WSCC supports HB 2017.

Tenant Protections

[House Bill 2023](#) (HB 2023)

HB 2023 streamlines enforcement of tenant protections. In accordance with the bishops' affordable housing legislative priority, the WSCC supports HB 2023.

Improving Services For Individuals With Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities

[Senate Bill 5268](#) (SB 5268)

SB 5268 increases the capabilities of community residential settings and redesigns intermediate care facilities. This is a landmark bill to improve services for individuals with disabilities. In line with the bishops' legislative priority to care for the aging and those disabilities, the WSCC supports SB 5268.

Unemployment Benefits For Immigrants

[Senate Bill 5438](#) (SB 5438)

SB 5438 establishes unemployment benefits for immigrants experiencing job loss as the result of COVID-19. During the pandemic some of the highest rates of job loss have been in low-wage sectors with the largest number of immigrant workers: restaurant, hotel, retail, and construction industries. SB 5438 establishes a program to provide unemployment benefits to workers excluded from state unemployment insurance benefits due to immigration or citizenship status. Under this program, individuals will receive \$400/week for unemployment due to the pandemic during the period of January 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022. In line with the bishops' immigration and economic justice legislative priorities, the WSCC supports SB 5438.

Establishing a Prescription Drug Affordability Board

[Senate Bill 5532](#) (SB 5532)

SB 5532 establishes a Prescription Drug Affordability Board. The Prescription Drug Affordability Board will have the authority to set upper limit payments for up to 12 prescription drugs that have led or will lead to excess costs for consumers. In accordance with the bishops' health care legislative priority, the WSCC supports SB 5532.

Expanding Eligibility For the Independent Youth Housing Program

[Senate Bill 5566](#) (SB 5566)

The Independent Youth Housing Program provides rental assistance and case management services to youth who have aged out of foster care programs. One of the goals of the program is to prevent youth from experiencing homelessness, as this population is at increased risk for

homelessness. HB 5566 increases eligibility of the Independent Youth Housing Program by including youth who were in foster care at any time, extending the age limit from 23 to 25, and including youth receiving voluntary extended foster care services. In line with the bishops' children and families and affordable housing legislative priorities, the WSCC supports SB 5566.

Cost Sharing For Prescription Drugs

[Senate Bill 5610](#) (SB 5610)

SB 5610 requires that all cost-sharing amounts paid by health insurance enrollees for prescription drugs be counted against enrollees' cost sharing requirements, such as deductibles, copayments, coinsurance, or similar obligations. One of the bishops' health care priorities is to address the cost of prescription drugs, and the WSCC supports SB 5610.

Discriminatory Use of Credit Scores For Insurance

[Senate Bill 5623](#) (SB 5623)

On January 11, WSCC executive director, Mario Villanueva, testified to oppose SB 5623, which perpetuates the discriminatory use of credit scores for insurance for new applicants and during renewals. View his testimony [here](#). Inequities are embedded in the use of credit scores for insurance, as they have a disproportionate negative impact on people of color and low income individuals. Mortgage payments are factored into credit scores, but on-time rent, cell phone, and utility payments are not factored into credit scores. Only 46% of Black Americans and 50% of the Latino population own homes, as opposed to 75% of white Americans. Consequently, relying on credit scores for determining insurance rates puts people of color and low income individuals at an unfair disadvantage. Additionally, a lower credit score rating is not a clear indicator of risky driving behavior. In accordance with WSCC's legislative priorities of racial justice and economic justice, the WSCC opposes SB 5623.

Human Trafficking and Commercial Drivers Licenses

[Senate Bill 5631](#) (SB 5631)

SB 5631 addresses human trafficking by commercial drivers. SB 5631 disqualifies a person convicted of human trafficking offenses from holding a commercial driver license for life. Human trafficking often involves the use of commercial vehicles. In accordance with the bishops' legislative priority to respect the life and dignity of all, the WSCC supports SB 5631.

Renew Act

[Senate Bill 5697](#) (SB 5697)

The Renew Act establishes a program for the management of consumer packaging and paper products to be funded and implemented by producers of those products. This new program also includes reuse and recycling rate targets, convenient collection service standards, responsible management, infrastructure investments, and education and outreach. In line with the bishops' legislative priority to care for God's creation, the WSCC supports SB 5697.

Increasing the Personal Needs Allowance For Medicaid Recipients

[Senate Bill 5745](#) (SB 5745)

SB 5745 increases the personal needs allowance to a more sustainable level. Federal law requires that Medicaid recipients contribute to the cost of their long-term care. In calculating their contribution, a personal needs allowance may be deducted. The current personal needs allowance is too small, amounting to \$1,045 per month for a single person to cover rent, food, and other costs. A higher personal needs allowance gives seniors the opportunity to choose to stay in their homes and receive care, rather than move to more expensive facilities.

Washington currently only allows personal needs allowances to equal 100% of the federal benefit rate, but other states allow for a personal needs allowances equaling 300% of the federal benefit rate. Catholic Community Services' Peter Nazzal, Director of Long Term Care, testified in favor of HB 5745. In line with the bishops' legislative priorities of economic justice and caring for the aging and disabled, the WSCC supports SB 5745.

Improving Health Outcomes For Children On Medicaid

[House Bill 5912](#) (HB 5912)

HB 5912 improves health outcomes for children on Apple Health, Washington state's Medicaid program, by increasing Early Periodic Screening, Diagnosis, and Treatment (EPSDT), or well child checkups, to be in line with the American Academy of Pediatrics' Bright Future Guidelines. Apple Health currently only covers 22 EPSDT visits, but the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends a schedule of 31 well EPSDT visits from birth to age 20. In line with the bishops' hospitals and health care and children and families legislative priorities, the WSCC supports HB 5912.