



# Washington State Catholic Conference

The Public Policy Voice of the Bishops of Washington State

## WSSCC Newsletter for Catholic Schools

Winter Quarter 2022

*As the public policy voice of the four bishops of Washington state, the Washington State Catholic Conference (WSSCC) advocates for policies that serve the common good and recognize the dignity of every human person. Our advocacy is guided by Catholic Social Teaching, and supporting Catholic schools and education is a key goal of our mission..*



### **The 2022 State Legislative Session**

The 2022 state legislative session is currently underway! The session began on January 10 and will conclude on March 10. The Legislature works on a biennium, a two-year cycle. Sessions are either “long,” if a new budget is being written, or “short” if only a supplemental budget is being written. A new budget was passed during the long session last year, so this year consists of a brief, 60-day session. Due to the pandemic, the legislative session is being conducted virtually.

### **School Choice and Empower Washington**

Creating opportunities for students to attend Catholic schools is one policy focus of the Washington State Catholic Conference. The bishops and the superintendents of Catholic schools in the Archdiocese of Seattle, Diocese of Yakima, and Diocese of Spokane support the efforts of [Empower Washington](#), a bipartisan movement working to put families at the center of our education system. Empower Washington proposes creating education savings accounts. Consisting of education tax dollars, education savings accounts may be used by parents to pay for a variety of education opportunities, including Catholic schools, other private schools, technical schools, online education, homeschool, public charter schools, and more.



Empower WA is building a multi-year strategy to advocate for school choice options for parents and students. Visit [Empower Washington](#) to join the movement or learn more. Questions may also be directed to Quentin Orem, [quentin@empowerwashington.org](mailto:quentin@empowerwashington.org).

## School Choice Bills

In addition to collaborating with Empower Washington on school choice efforts, the WSCC also tracks school choice legislation. Below are some of this session's school choice bills:

- [House Bill 1633](#) (HB 1633) creates 100,000 scholarships of \$10,000 each that may be applied to home school or private schools.
- [House Bill 2042](#) (HB 2042) creates a K-12 education scholarship program consisting of 130,000 scholarships of \$7,000 each. Twenty-five per cent of these scholarships would be awarded to students of specific criteria (from low-income families, homeless, foster students, receiving special education services). The remaining 75% of the scholarships would be distributed geographically across the state.
- [Senate Bill 5205](#) (SB 5205) establishes a K-12 education voucher program that may be applied to public or private schools.

The WSCC is highly supportive of school choice programs that increase families' opportunities to attend Catholic schools. However, school choice is an issue that is traditionally opposed by the current majority in the House and Senate. Passing a school choice bill requires an extensive amount of planning and coalition building, which are part of the long-term goals of the WSCC and [Empower Washington](#). At this time, HB 1633, HB 2042, and SB 5205 are not currently expected to advance or be passed into law this session.

## The Bishops' State Legislative Priorities

Every year the four bishops of the Archdiocese of Seattle, Diocese of Yakima, and Diocese of Spokane select legislative priorities that reflect Catholic social teaching and our desire to serve the common good. Catholic schools are one of the bishops' priorities. More details on their twelve legislative priorities can be found [here](#). A small example of bills that we are working on include:

- [House Bill 1947](#) (HB 1947) and [Senate Bill 5838](#) (SB 5838), diaper subsidies for recipients of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF). These bills authorize additional payments to TANF recipients with children under the age three to cover child-related necessities such as diapers. The WSCC supports HB 1947 and SB 5838.
- [House Bill 1141](#) (HB 1141) expands access to assisted suicide and weakens safeguards. The WSCC opposes HB 1141.
- The [Renew Act](#), Senate Bill 5697 (SB 5697), addresses plastic that is filling landfills and polluting the marine environment. The bill calls for modernizing Washington's recycling system, reducing waste, providing uniform recycling access to residents across the state, increasing recycling and reuse targets over time, and incentivizing companies to make product packaging more sustainable. Additionally, producers of plastic will be held more accountable for the lifecycle of their products. The WSCC supports the Renew Act.
- The [Solitary Confinement Restriction Act](#), House Bill 1756 (HB 1756), limits the use of solitary confinement in prisons. 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 WSCC supports the Solitary Confinement Restriction Act.



## What Public Policy Issues Are Important to Catholics of Washington State?

[Join our network](#) to learn more about what public policy issues are important to the bishops and Catholics of Washington state. You will receive our Catholic Advocacy Bulletin and occasional Action Alerts. Through the end of the state legislative session on March 10 our Catholic Advocacy Bulletin is emailed weekly. Outside of the legislative session, it is emailed monthly.

## Year-Round Advocacy

The Washington State Catholic Conference and Catholic advocacy partners are working to grow a year-round, statewide legislative and policy advocacy network. Advocacy resources and more on this plan may be found [here](#).

## Some useful links to refer to during the legislative session:

[Legislative Priorities of the Washington State Catholic Conference](#)

[Identify your district and legislators](#)

[Washington State Legislature](#) - Information on bills, hearings, legislators, and more

[Find bill information](#)

[WSCC website](#)



## WSCC Staff

We invite you to contact us at any time.

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Life. Justice.  
Liberty.