



STATE OF WASHINGTON  
**HEALTH CARE AUTHORITY**

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May 9, 2019

Dear Stakeholders and Partners:

The 2019 Legislative Session was productive and historic. The policies passed this session will truly help us build a healthier Washington. For example, the Legislature funded more equitable health coverage for school employees, established a public option and invested in a robust behavioral health system.

The Health Care Authority (HCA) now turns to the work of implementing the decisions made during the session, in partnership with you. Among the many health-related highlights from the 2019 session:

**Expanding coverage options**

- [Senate Bill 5526](#) — Creates a state-procured public health care option, and directs HCA to contract with health plans to offer coverage on the Washington Health Benefit Exchange (Governor's request).
- [Senate Bill 5274](#) — Expands Compact of Free Association (COFA) Islander health care benefits begun in 2018 by creating the COFA Islander Dental Care program, which extends dental services covered under the Medical Assistance Dental program to eligible COFA Islanders.
- The budget provides additional funding necessary to implement the School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB) program for school employees statewide in January 2020.

**Promoting transparency**

- [House Bill 1065](#) — Affects consumer health care costs by requiring health carriers to cover emergency services provided at an out-of-network emergency department and prohibiting balanced billing in certain circumstances.
- [House Bill 1224](#) — Increases prescription drug cost transparency by requiring health carriers, pharmacy benefit managers, and drug manufacturers to report to HCA information on drug price-setting, price trends, and prescribing frequency, which HCA must report to the Legislature.
- [Senate Bill 5741](#) — Transfers the all-payer claims database from the Office of Financial Management (OFM) to HCA to ensure sustainable operation of this important health care transparency tool (joint agency request bill with HCA and OFM).

**Addressing health disparities**

- [Senate Bill 5415](#) — Creates the Washington Indian Health Improvement Act to increase the health status of American Indians and Alaska Natives, recognizing health disparities

and historical trauma. The Act includes forming the Governor's Indian Health Advisory Council and the Indian Health Improvement Reinvestment Account.

- Funding is provided for Health Care Authority to implement a Take Charge look-alike program for individuals who would be eligible for this program except for their immigration status.

### **Enhancing the behavioral health system**

- [House Bill 1394](#) — Establishes intensive behavioral health treatment facilities, including a pilot program for mental health drop-in centers (Governor's request).
- [House Bill 1593](#) — Creates a University of Washington School of Medicine behavioral health innovation and integration campus designed to increase the health care workforce and encourage innovation to promote behavioral health integration (Governor's request).
- [House Bill](#) — Addresses family-initiated treatment for adolescents and adolescent mental health treatment information disclosure (from the Children's Mental Health Workgroup).
- [Senate Bill 5380](#) — Provides tools to combat the opioid epidemic through evidence-based treatment, prevention, and related services for opioid use disorder (Governor's request).
- [Senate Bill 5432](#) — Addresses behavioral and physical health integrated care by amending a number of statutory provisions, consistent with the overall structure of implementing behavioral health integration through Medicaid managed care statewide (Governor's request).
- [Senate Bill 5444](#) — Responds to the Trueblood settlement by providing timely competency evaluations and restoration services to those with behavioral health conditions (Governor's request).
- [Senate Bill 5903](#) — Includes multiple recommendations from the HCA-staffed and co-chaired Children's Mental Health Workgroup, which is working to improve access to mental health services for children and their families.

Governor Jay Inslee and the Legislature implemented many other policies that ensure Washington is a healthy place to live and work. That includes investments in clean energy, moving the legal age to purchase tobacco and vaping products to 21, and implementing a publicly funded long-term care trust.

I am grateful to have colleagues and partners who share the vision of building a healthier Washington. We will be seeking feedback and collaboration as we turn to the work of implementing these decisions.

Sincerely,



Susan E. Birch, MBA, BSN, RN  
Director