



2024 ISSUE PAPER: HEALTH CARE

Position statements:

The LWVWA position on health care states that health care policies need to “ensure universal access for all residents to a comprehensive, uniform, and affordable set of health services. These services shall be available regardless of one’s health status (i.e., pre-existing conditions) or financial status.”

The LWVUS position on health care states that the League “believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all U.S. residents. Every U.S. resident should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care, and mental health care. Every U.S. resident should have access to affordable, quality in- and out-patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive service that is integrated with, and achieves parity with, physical health care. Dental, vision, and hearing care also are important but lower in priority. The League believes that under any system of health care reform, consumers/patients should be permitted to purchase services or insurance coverage beyond the basic level. The League favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums. As the United States moves toward a national health insurance plan, an employer-based system of health care reform that provides universal access is acceptable to the League.” At the 2022 National Convention the membership adopted by concurrence the New York’s position on a Single Payor Universal Healthcare Plan.

Review of the 2023 Session:

The League at both the state and national level supports access to affordable quality healthcare for all. Restrictions to access, provider availability, and networks plague our healthcare system. Currently the number one cause of personal bankruptcy in this nation is healthcare. Inequity in the system is rampant with one’s zip code defining what healthcare is available as well as the quality of it.

During the last session legislation was passed addressing some of these issues.

Personal choices in healthcare were the focus of important legislation from abortion to medical aid in dying. Legislation protecting access to abortion and gender affirming care, abortion provider protections, removal of cost barriers for abortion and data protection bills were voted into law. However, SB 5241 concerning the acquisition of health care facilities and mergers, did not move forward and is a critical piece to assuring choices in healthcare.

Another important focus was addressing healthcare workforce stressors by streamlining licensing and certification processes. Immigrant healthcare was included in funding and Washington was the first state in the nation to receive a waiver for immigrants to participate in the healthcare marketplace.

Other Legislation which passed thanks to Intense & Sustained League Support.

HB 1678 Establishing and authorizing the profession of dental therapy. This bill defined the profession of dental therapy and how it will fit within the dental team but allows it only to exist within federally qualified health centers. This is a bill long supported by the League as it promises to improve access to dental care for underserved pockets of the broader community. Adding the dental therapist to the dental team will not only expand the team but also

address racial and ethnic disparities in urban and rural dental health care.

SB 5179 Increasing access to the provisions of the Death with Dignity Act. This is a companion bill to HB 1281 championed by Rep. Skylar Rude for many years. Makes changes to the 2009 Death with Dignity Act, changes 'physician' to 'qualified medical provider.' Eliminated the 15-day waiting period and reduced it to 72 hours as well as expanded how the medication can be delivered. There was opposition to this bill by the differently abled coalition. This senate bill was sponsored by Senator Pederson and nineteen others. This bill faced opposition principally due to religious beliefs.

HB 1222 Requiring coverage for hearing Instruments. This bill has been Sponsored by Representative Orwell throughout its history. A health carrier offering a health plan issued or renewed on or after Jan. 1, 2023, must include coverage for hearing instruments for all persons with hearing deficits.

Legislative Healthcare Priorities for the 2024 session:

- Provide access to affordable health services with quality standards of care, necessary workforce to meet health care needs, and assurance of individual freedom in care choices.
- Support legislation that would implement single payer and/or universal health care.

SB 5241 Concerning the acquisition of health care facilities and mergers. Health system acquisitions must improve, rather than harm, access to affordable quality health care. The legislature is committed to ensuring that Washingtonians have access to the full range of reproductive, end-of-life, and gender affirming health care services.

SJM 8006 Requesting that the Federal Government create a Universal Health Care Program. This bill sponsored by Senator Hasegawa, Cleveland, Billig, Kuderer, Lovelett, Nugyen, Shewmake, Stanford, Valdez, and Wilson, C. is a joint memorial to the Federal Government which requests the Government to create a single payor Universal Healthcare program and if it will not or cannot the Government should provide Washington State with the necessary waivers allowing the State to develop, define, and fund our own. It is a statement to Washington DC that we the people of Washington want Universal Healthcare funded by a single payor system separate from employment.

SJR 8202 Senate Joint Resolution. Amending the State Constitution to address reproductive freedom. This resolution will require passage by two-thirds of the membership in both the House and Senate and if passed will be voted on by the voters in the next general election. Sponsored by Senators Keiser and Kuderer and fourteen others. This bill had a public hearing in Senate Health & Long-term Care Committee on 1/24/23 at 8am and was heard in Executive Session on 1/31/23 and received a Do Pass recommendation but did not pass out of Rules.

Contact Information:

Jody A. Disney, Health Care Issue Chair

Tressa Kentner, Health Care Advocate

Coalitions:

Health Care is a Human Right Coalition-WA

Children's Alliance