

LEGISLATIVE SESSION | MAY 2021

# POST-SESSION REVIEW

## Pro-Choice Washington 2021 Update



### WHY THIS MATTERS

The intersection of community voices, health and economic crises, and the political moment resulted in the passage of bold progressive policies like we haven't seen before in Washington State. Pro-Choice Washington's members have been advocating for several of these policies for nearly a decade and our hard work laid a path for progress.

When COVID-19 hit, the pandemic both illuminated and exacerbated the deep health and economic disparities that have existed in our state for decades. This, combined with renewed calls by Black Lives Matter organizers for racial equity and an end to state-sanctioned violence, created a situation that lawmakers could no longer ignore. At the same time, the transition of the legislature from in-person to virtual provided community members unprecedented access for their voices to be heard.

Ultimately, this demonstrates that when community is centered, lawmakers listen, and it results in impactful legislation. We cannot afford to wait for another crisis to make similar gains, we must keep pressing forward to fulfill our vision for health, economic, gender, and racial equity in our state.

### KEY RESULTS

We are encouraged by the major gains this legislative session with three of our four priority bills passed, including the Protecting Pregnant Patients Act (SSB 5140) and a Capital Gains Tax (SB 5096). Additionally, eight of nine support bills passed, led by our incredible partners and community activists, including the Gender-Affirming Care Act (SB 5313). Pro-Choice Washington activists showed up to drive this change, representing 86 percent of Washington's legislative districts, holding 55 grassroots lobbying meetings, and sending more than 1,500 emails to 129 lawmakers!



## WHAT COMES NEXT

This session laid a strong foundation of successful policy and advocacy tactics that we will build on for future sessions. In particular, the virtual session opened new opportunities to increase access to the legislative process, which Pro-Choice Washington hopes will remain in the future, including options for remote testimony, remote hearing sign-ins, and virtual meetings with lawmakers



## HOW YOU CAN HELP

This progress is an amazing example of what we can achieve when communities come together around issues that matter. If you're not involved yet, please consider joining our efforts in these priority ways:

- Join our movement to stop discriminatory restrictions to care in Washington State
- Donate to support our continued work in communities across Washington
- Follow us on social media to stay on top of news and action opportunities
  - TW: [@ProChoiceWA](https://twitter.com/ProChoiceWA)
  - IG: [@prochoicewashington](https://www.instagram.com/prochoicewashington)
  - FB: [@ProChoiceWA](https://www.facebook.com/ProChoiceWA)

## THANK YOU!

We have never felt more connected with our members during a legislative session than we did this year. We are so grateful for your creativity and consistency. Pro-Choice Washington members had increased leadership in our legislative work, quickly adapting to the first-ever virtual legislative session and taking on critical roles, including: scheduling and leading meetings with lawmakers, peer-to-peer lobby trainings, signing into hearings, and tracking the progress of bills on the legislative site.

We are also grateful to our champion lawmakers who boldly and unapologetically advocated for these bills, and who adapted and were creative in engaging constituents through new virtual platforms.







# STATUS OF PRIORITY LEGISLATION



## PROTECTING PREGNANT PATIENTS ACT (SSB 5140)

### PASSED!

This law will ensure that willing healthcare providers can offer life-saving treatment for pregnancy complications, including miscarriage care and treatment for ectopic pregnancies, regardless of the policies of the health system they work for. This law is critical to addressing the urgent needs of pregnant patients who have faced denials and delays in care.

## PROGRESSIVE REVENUE PROGRESS!

The passage of these bills is a historic victory for the State of Washington and a critical first step to building a more equitable tax code. We must build on these policies in future sessions to sustain critical investments in the community programs that enable all Washingtonians to survive and thrive.

- **A Capital Gains Tax (SB 5096)** will create a new 7% excise tax on extraordinary profits from the sale of financial assets (capital gains) above \$250,000 per year **PASSED!**
- **A Working Families Tax Credit (1297)** will provide a targeted cash rebate of \$300-\$1,200 annually directly to Washington's low-income families **PASSED!**

## KEEP OUR CARE ACT FAILED

This bill would have created public oversight for health system consolidations before they occur to ensure mergers and acquisitions do not result in the reduced affordability or availability of existing services.

We believe such discriminatory restrictions to reproductive healthcare are one of the greatest threats to reproductive freedom in Washington state. It is a top priority for Pro-Choice Washington to address discriminatory restrictions to care in order to ensure that everyone can access the health care they need regardless of where they live. Thank you, Pro-Choice Washington activists, for your deep advocacy and lobbying work on this issue this session. Your actions have laid strong groundwork for the Keep Our Care Act in 2022. Through your efforts, we saw lawmakers demonstrate a shared urgency on this issue. Pro-Choice Washington will continue to organize around health system restrictions throughout 2021 and we look forward to building power with you to make even more progress next legislative session.

# STATUS OF PRIORITY LEGISLATION

## INSURANCE DISCRIMINATION - COVERAGE FOR GENDER AFFIRMING CARE (SB 5313)

**PASSED!**

This bill will prevent insurance carriers from denying coverage for gender-affirming treatment. It will also ensure that if a carrier does not have an adequate network for gender-affirming treatment, that carrier will help identify geographically accessible and timely care at an in-network rate. Access to gender-affirming care is medically necessary and a critical component of reproductive freedom. It is also a racial equity issue. Black, Indigenous, and people of color represent 45% of transgender individuals nationally. Ensuring access to gender-affirming healthcare is a protective factor for violence and discrimination for all gender diverse people, but especially for Black trans women and trans women of color.

## EQUITY IN MEDICAL TRAINING (SB 5228 & SB 5229)

**PASSED!**

SB 5228 will require the schools of medicine at the University of Washington and Washington State University to develop a curriculum on health equity for medical students. This bill will require students to complete a course that includes this curriculum to graduate. SB 5229 will require health care professionals to complete health equity continuing education training once every four years. These bills are an important step towards identifying and eliminating structural racism in health care systems and building towards cultural safety for patients and providers.

## EXTENDING POSTPARTUM COVERAGE (SB 5068)

**PASSED!**

This bill would extend Medicaid coverage from sixty days to twelve months postpartum. Currently, postpartum Medicaid coverage ends sixty days after pregnancy, creating an unsafe gap in care. Gaps in care, particularly during the postpartum period, contribute to pregnancy-related deaths. Maternal mortality data reveals significant racial and ethnic disparities. In Washington, American Indian and Alaska Native women are six to seven times more likely to die from pregnancy-related causes than white women.



## IMMIGRANT HEALTH COVERAGE (HB 1191)

**FAILED**

This bill would create parity in publicly-funded health coverage programs for all Washington residents regardless of immigration status. Specifically, it would have created a Medicaid look-alike program for Washingtonians who are currently eligible except for immigration status and create parity in subsidies for qualified health and dental programs for all Washington residents. An estimated 46 percent of undocumented Washingtonians are uninsured, compared to seven percent of the overall population. While this bill did not pass, the legislature did pass a budget proviso that will provide some short term funding for critical services.

### Budget Proviso Funding Health Equity

The Washington State Legislature passed a \$35M budget proviso for the provision of health care services for uninsured and underinsured individuals, regardless of immigration status, through grants to local clinics. Additionally, the legislature has passed a proviso that directs the Health Benefit Exchange to explore opportunities to facilitate enrollment of those excluded by Medicaid and federal programs into a state program by 2024

**PASSED!**



# STATUS OF PRIORITY LEGISLATION

## VOTING RIGHTS RESTORATION (HB 1078)

### PASSED!

This bill will strengthen democracy by automatically restoring the right to vote of an estimated 20,000 Washingtonians who have had criminal convictions in their past once. This bill will ensure that once a person has been released from total confinement, their right to vote is restored. This legislation is critical to ensuring a strong and representative democracy.



## POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

### PROGRESS!

Pro-Choice Washington supports policies that prevent the use of force by police officers and increase police accountability to community members. We also support policies that divest from policing and the carceral system and redirect those resources to urgent community needs that disproportionately impact Black communities, including healthcare access. This is critical to the health and safety of Washingtonians, particularly Black and Indigenous communities that have been subject to decades of harm and violence by police, and chronic underinvestment in community needs. There were a number of bills that passed this session related to police accountability. Some of these include:

- **SB 5051** will expand the conduct officers may be fired for and expands background requirements for those applying to be officers
- **HB 1310** will require officers to utilize de-escalation tactics and limit the use of deadly force tactics
- **HB 1267** will create the office of independent investigations to conduct investigations into the use of force in an unbiased and thorough manner
- **HB 1054** would ban or restrict the use of violent tactics by officers

### ALL PASSED!



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