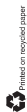


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Report on the 2016 Session

34th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

Spring 2016



REPRESENTATIVE EILEEN CODY

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Neighbors,

After a busy, short legislative session and a few weeks of overtime, we moved forward with a supplemental budgets that reflect our values. While some said that this year we would do nothing, I stood up for getting important work done. We passed several pieces of legislation to address the emergent needs of our state, including:

- Improving teacher recruitment and retention through investments in mentoring programs for new educators and increased training for paraeducators.
- Increasing investments in mental health services including additional state hospital staff at Western State Hospital, mobile crisis teams, and crisis triage beds.
- Addressing the growing homelessness crisis in Washington state by investing in more emergency residential services and beds throughout the state, and providing resources to local governments to help homeless people transition into permanent housing.

While it's not everything I wanted, it is a step in the right direction. Next year will be a tough year and there's more we need to do. But if we reject the political infighting that has plagued the national stage we can find a compromise that works for all Washingtonians, without compromising our values.

In addition to the investments in mental health funding, we are making policy changes that will improve our mental health and chemical dependency systems. Inside you can read more about my work to pass Ricky's Law, and how the Legislature is working to fix major problems in our state mental health hospitals.

Please don't hesitate to reach out to my office if you have questions or comments or just want to share an idea. It's an honor to serve you.

Sincerely yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Eileen Cody".

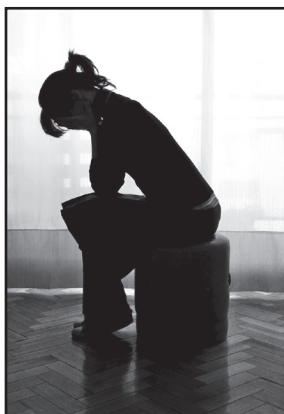
Rep. Eileen Cody
D-West Seattle
Chair, Health Care and Wellness Committee



Ricky's Law: Treating substance abuse disorders

Substance abuse and chemical dependency have become far too common in our lives. Almost everyone can say they know someone who suffers from drug addiction or alcoholism. Unfortunately, how we treat substance abuse patients is different than how we treat mental health illnesses and disorders.

If someone is a threat to themselves or others - suffering from a mental health crisis like schizophrenia - they can be involuntarily committed to get the care they need. But, our laws don't offer the same option when someone is drinking themselves to death or abusing prescription medications. A person has to voluntarily accept treatment, and they can get up and walk away from care without a doctor's approval.



I started working on changing the laws regarding involuntary commitment and chemical dependency when I met Lauren Davis, an advocate for caring for mental health and substance abuse patients equally. Her friend, Ricky, had suffered from substance abuse addiction and been in and out of emergency rooms. We worked together to write and pass a bill that would get people like Ricky the care they need.

We have begun the process of integrating our mental health and chemical dependency laws that will continue over the next 10 years, getting people better access to secure detoxification facilities and building new facilities. As we move forward, more people who suffer from substance abuse disorders will get the care they deserve, and family members will be able to play a bigger role in making sure that happens.

Mental health funding in operating and construction budgets

There's been a lot of work on improving mental health in our state beyond our work on Ricky's Law. Last year we invested over \$100 million in our mental health care system to repair some of the damage done by cuts made during the Great Recession. This year, we continued making investments, including:

- \$8.5m for Hospital Diversion/Crisis Triage Centers
- \$7.9m for critical repairs and upgrades at state mental health facilities and hospitals
- \$7.5m for Mental Health Supportive Housing
- \$5m for the Community Behavioral Health Grant Program

Additional funding only goes so far and we still need to fix problems like unacceptable wait times for patients who need to be admitted for treatment. We passed a bill to give more legislative oversight for the way our state hospitals are run to begin fixing some of the problems. Representatives from the executive and legislative branches will oversee the state's mental health hospitals and three outside consultants will look at the hospitals' staffing issues, whether staff are using the best mental health treatment practices, and how patients enter and leave treatment.

We also started the work of addressing the mental health needs of children so that we can reduce the future demand for treatment. The Children's Mental Health Work Group will help identify ways to increase access to mental health services because some children require more help to get the strong developmental foundation they need. By studying and identifying how to get those services to children in need, we can make a difference in the overall mental health of our state.



In addition to statewide work, we worked on bills that will affect you locally that I wanted to share with you:

- North Highline will have the opportunity to vote on annexation this fall and if they do, the annexing city will get a tax credit to pay for services to expand their coverage of annexed areas, without an increasing to the taxpayer, thanks to new legislation we passed this year.
- The Vashon Ferry Advisory Committee will have a chance to appoint new members through the King County Council, a necessity after the Vashon/Maury Island Community Council disbanded.
- Though it didn't pass, I worked hard on a bill to find ways to end surprise emergency room bills, caused when a hospital is in your network coverage, but a doctor who works there isn't. A costly issue that needs to be addressed, it didn't pass but I will be working hard and meeting with doctors, hospitals, and insurers to develop a new bill that protects patients.