



May 2020

2020 Legislative Session Report

Dear friends and neighbors,

The coronavirus pandemic has brought dramatic change to our daily lives and it's been challenging for everybody, but following the Stay Home, Stay Healthy order really is working. The [Department of Health](#) shows that the epidemiologic curves of both, confirmed cases and deaths, are definitely flattening. I am grateful and proud of our community for staying the course to make a difference.

Your 21st Legislative District delegation, Sen. Marko Liias, Rep. Strom Peterson and I, recently mailed a **COVID-19 Resource Guide** to constituent households. If you did not receive it, or if you'd rather read it online, you can access it [here](#). As mentioned in that mailer, we would have normally sent you a session recap newsletter, but we felt it was more important to get you the resource guide first.

In this report you'll find information on legislation passed this year in the areas that support our health, education, families, workforce and government accountability. I am also including summaries of the supplemental budgets with links where you can see detailed data and specific projects funded.

This pandemic has affected all of us in major ways. If there is anything I can do to help you manage the current situation, please reach out. The best way to connect with me right now is through [email](#). I will do my best to get you the answers and support you need.

Sincerely,

REP. LILLIAN ORTIZ-SELF
21ST LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

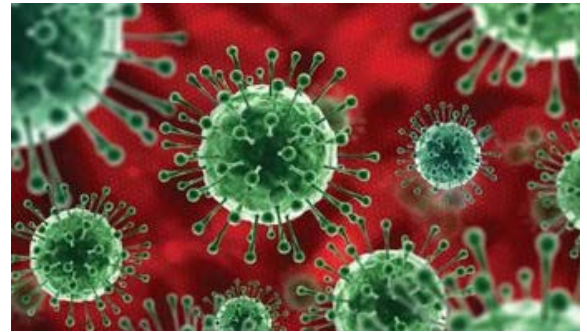


COVID-19 Response

Ensuring resources as we all face this crisis together

The Legislature’s COVID-19 response: [HB 2965](#)

Public health has been underfunded since the Great Recession. This year we allocated new funding to help get local public health agencies in a better place to serve their communities. Then COVID-19 swept across Washington. Democrats collaborated with Republicans for a bipartisan bill to take \$200 million from the Rainy-Day Fund to inject a massive amount of money into local and state public health agencies, DSHS, and other agencies to ramp up testing, hire nurses, and assist businesses struggling with layoffs.



Increasing flexibility of shared leave, including for COVID-19 pandemic response: [HB 2739](#)

When people get sick, they should be able to take time off work to recover and get healthy. This legislation provides flexibility for the use of shared leave, including shared leave use for COVID-19 infection or exposure.

Maintaining healthcare coverage for educators: [SB 6189](#)

During the COVID-19 crisis, when schools were shut down, the Legislature saw to it that school employees would maintain health insurance eligibility for the remainder of the school year, even if the employees would otherwise lose eligibility due to a school closure or changes in school operations. This way, all school employees who had insurance prior to this emergency, including hourly employees, will maintain that coverage.



Education

Providing opportunities to learn for ALL students

Expanding ethnic studies materials: [SB 6066](#) ([HB 2633](#))

In 2019, the Legislature directed the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to develop ethnic studies learning standards and make instructional content related to ethnic studies available in grades 7-12. This bill expands the ethnic studies curriculum to grades

kindergarten to 6 so that younger grades have the ability to see themselves reflected in curriculum too. (I sponsored the companion bill in the House.)

Workforce Education Investment Act trailer: [SB 6492](#)

Honoring the commitment to students by providing free or reduced tuition for apprenticeships, community and technical colleges, and universities. Democrats recognize that Washington jobs should be filled by Washington workers. That is why they passed the Workforce Education Investment Act, a once-in-a-generation investment to train Washington residents in skills needed for good-paying jobs and meet employers' increasing demand for skilled workers.



Expanding access to higher education: [SB 6141](#) ([HB 2523](#))

This bill develops an online financial aid calculator to provide estimates of federal and state aid so that students understand how much college costs and have a clear estimate on how much financial aid they can receive, as well as have better clarity in financial aid award letter. (I sponsored the companion bill in the House.)



Affordable Housing & Homelessness
Everyone deserves shelter, stability and safety

Allowing tenants to pay certain move-in costs in installments: [HB 1694](#)

High upfront costs for rental units are keeping low income people and seniors from being able to afford moving into an apartment. This bill will allow renters to pay for security deposits and fees in installments and more quickly get into housing.

Homeless Grace Period eligibility: [HB 2456](#)

The 4-month Homeless Grace Period (HGP) addresses barriers for families experiencing homelessness in accessing the Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) subsidy. For 50 percent of families accessing the grace period, four months is not enough time. This new law extends the grace period from 4 to 12 months to ensure more homeless families have access to childcare so kids can learn, and parents can focus on housing, employment and stabilizing their families.

Increasing urban Housing Supply: [HB 2343](#)

This new law improves upon legislation passed last year to encourage cities to create partnerships to build more and build better, increasing residential building capacity and cutting red tape to deliver desperately needed affordable housing faster.



Authorizing accessory dwelling units: [SB 6617](#)

Accessory dwelling units (ADUs) are familiar, modest types of housing that are generally more affordable. They are a low-impact way to increase housing options in existing neighborhoods. Plus, living closer to transit and jobs rather than increasing sprawl is better for the environment because it can reduce commute times. The bill modifies changes made in 2019 to encourage jurisdictions to allow ADUs and makes it a requirement under certain circumstances.

Cutting red tape in the Housing Trust Fund requirements: [SB 6229](#) ([HB 2348](#))

To strengthen the partnership between the state and nonprofits that build affordable housing, this new law makes it easier for nonprofits to navigate grant programs to build affordable housing quickly.

*Supporting Washington Families & Workforce
Shaping policies that protect families, generate quality jobs
and build thriving communities*

Concerning certificates of parental improvement: [HB 1645](#)

I sponsored this measure to give a second chance to parents who were involved with the child welfare system but have improved their circumstances and parenting skills. Allows caregivers who have turned their lives around to petition Department of Children, Youth, and Families for a “certificate of parental improvement” that would allow them the option to work at a nursing home or assisted living facility, become a child care provider, or pursue the foster parent licensing process.

Expanding access to nutritious food: [SB 6309](#)/[HB 2262](#)

Requires the Department of Health to allocate a minimum of \$28 for WIC recipients during the summer months, to be used on fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets. The bill also ensures that families on the WIC program will continue to receive their monthly amount, even during times of economic hardship.



Full access to child care for families with low-incomes: [SB 6540](#) ([HB 2471](#))

Ensures that children will receive the full, 12-month childcare benefit for which they qualify under Working Connections. Under the past system, the 12-month clock starts as soon as an application is processed — often months before a parent can find and arrange childcare. This meant that many families only received 6-8 months of care, and often less. This bill requires that the clock start when childcare is secured – ensuring the full 12 months intended by the existing law.

Unemployment benefits for caregivers: [SB 5473](#) ([HB 1445](#))

Family caregivers – who are disproportionately women – are put in a bind by the way our Unemployment Insurance (UI) works. If a caregiver’s employer changes her schedule and she has to quit her job because she can’t find childcare during her new work hours, that is considered a “voluntary” quit and she doesn’t qualify for UI. This bill is the first step to fix that problem by analyzing how we can change eligibility requirements to protect caregivers in situations like these, while still being responsible stewards of the unemployment trust fund.

Strengthening the farm labor contractor system: [SB 6261](#)

This measure removes the nonprofit exemption from farm labor contracts to protect farm workers from unsafe practices and retaliation.

PERS 1/TRS 1 one-time 3 percent COLA: [HB 1390](#)

Retired teachers, corrections officers, and other public workers in the PERS 1/TRS 1 system have not seen a permanent cost of living adjustment in their retirement for years due to state budget cuts and increasing cost of living. Thanks to this new law, a one-time three percent increase is on its way, starting July 1, 2020.

Equity & Social Justice

Creating a welcoming, inclusive Washington

Nation’s first statewide Office of Equity: [HB 1783](#)

Creates the nation’s first statewide Office of Equity within the Office of the Governor to help reduce systemic disparities in our public institutions and systems. While many of Washington state’s agencies are engaged in efforts to reduce systemic inequities, there has been no statewide coordinated plan. The newly established Office of Equity will streamline the development and implementation of statewide policies and programs to build a more equitable system for all Washingtonians.

Note: While the governor signed the policy of House Bill 1783 into law, funding for the Office of Equity was vetoed in response to the catastrophic effect of COVID-19 on Washington’s economy. This includes funding for the community advisory board and requirements for state agencies to develop plans and policies, and to provide data to the Office of Equity.

Regulation of facial recognition technology: [SB 6280](#) ([HB 2856](#))

Places moral guardrails on how the public sector uses powerful facial recognition technology to prevent further biases, inaccuracies and oversurveillance of marginalized communities. This includes any use by law enforcement. New protections and regulations include:

- Requiring regular reporting on facial recognition technology.
- Testing for fairness and accuracy as the technology has been repeatedly proven to show biases and inaccuracies toward women, children, people of color, trans and nonbinary people and seniors.
- Providing employees with usage training.
- Requiring law enforcement obtain a court order for use in civil cases, or warrant for use in criminal cases, except in emergency situations.



Washington state Census Bill of Rights: [HB 2527](#)

Everyone has the right to get counted in the census without fear of harm or fraud – no matter where they come from. These rights include:

- Participation in the Census free of threat or intimidation.
- Confidentiality of the information provided in the census form.
- Ability to submit responses by phone, mail or online.

- Ability to request language access assistance.
- Ability to verify the identity of a census worker.

Additionally, the legislation creates a gross misdemeanor for the impersonation of a census worker with the intent of interfering with census operations, obtaining information or obtaining consent to enter individual's residences, and it establishes it as an unfair trade practice for mailing of materials with the intent of interfering with census operations, including political mailers.

Equitable & Effective Government

Supporting open, accountable, equitable, and efficient government

Protecting the privacy of public servants: [HB 1888](#)

Many public servants, including nurses and firefighters, work in dangerous jobs, and their work to strengthen and protect our communities should not put them at risk in their private lives. Sensitive, personal information, including addresses, birth dates and financial information should be protected to safeguard against identity theft, stalking, domestic violence and harassment. This piece of legislation specifically protects birth dates from public disclosure, with the exception of news media.

Protecting Washington's election security system: [HB 1251](#)

Protects Washington's election security system from cyber-attacks and prepares state and local officials for possible election interference by requiring Washington's Secretary of State, the Attorney General and Chief Information Officer to consult with county auditors to identify instances of security breaches in election systems and data, and determine whether the source of any breaches are foreign or domestic entities. Additionally, it requires the Secretary of State to report to the Legislature when security breaches occur and to provide recommendations to improve the election security system.



2020 Supplemental Budgets

OPERATING

The governor vetoes ([click here for the governor's veto message](#)) were certainly extraordinary measures, but they were necessary to prevent the spread of COVID-19 and help address the sudden and dramatic change to our state's fiscal situation. There's no denying they will have a substantial impact on Washington's economy and state revenues.

Even after the vetoes, however, this budget remained focused on protecting our most vulnerable Washingtonians and on the state's emergent needs. **Highlights include:**

- **Housing & Homelessness** - Increasing shelter capacity, keeping existing affordable housing units affordable, and building and maintaining affordable housing across the state.
- **Early Childhood Development & Child Care** - Taking steps to maintain access to childcare for families and support our childcare providers.
- **K-12 Education** - Increasing funding for pupil transportation, maintaining flexible local effort assistance dollars for districts with increasing property values, and planning for increases in future special education costs.
- **College & Workforce Development** - Following the 2019-21 biennial budget's historic investments in higher education, this year we are matching scholarship dollars for the Opportunity & Rural Jobs scholarship programs and expanding the Job Skills training program.
- **Children, Youth & Families** - Improving services for children and youth in foster care, addressing a shortfall in federal funds for child welfare services, and investing additional dollars necessary to keep youth sentenced in adult court in juvenile rehabilitation until age 25.
- **Human Services** - To prevent many families experiencing poverty from losing critical support when they need it most, this budget funds legislation to address Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program time limits, non-compliance sanctions, as well as to ensure TANF families retain child support payments.
- **Health Care** - Investing in public health, preserving health care access in rural communities, and helping our hospitals serve the highest need patients by supporting transitioning difficult-to-discharge patients to community settings.

- **Behavioral Health** - Providing additional resources to local behavioral health entities for non-Medicaid services like crisis intervention, shoring up our state hospital operations and staffing, and beginning a pilot for supporting children in need of more intensive behavioral health services.
- **Long-Term Care** - Investing in nursing home Medicaid rates at a critical time, improving rates for supported living providers facing higher costs, and enhancing funding for the transition to a consumer-directed employer program for individual providers.
- **Corrections & Public Safety** - Reforming our state's community supervision program and investing in improving opportunities for previously incarcerated individuals to successfully transition upon reentry. Additionally, we provided needed staff and health care resources for our state prisons and invested in training for our local law enforcement partners.
- **Natural Resources** - Providing ongoing support to stabilize the Department of Fish & Wildlife without fee increases, increasing funding for wildfire suppression at the Department of Natural Resources, and investing in supporting recreation in our beautiful state parks.

[Click here](#) for Supplemental Operating Budget graphics, reports and documents.



CAPITAL

\$175 million in construction projects for the 2020 Supplemental Capital Budget, of which \$89 million is financed with state general obligation bonds. Includes \$13 million in authorizations for agencies and higher education institutions to enter into alternative financing contracts. This budget also makes strong investments in housing, shelter, environmental cleanup and school construction.

[Click here](#) for Supplemental Capital Budget graphics, reports, project maps and documents.

TRANSPORTATION

Despite Initiative 976, which cut state transportation revenue by almost half a billion dollars, this budget protects the most vulnerable—including rural mass transit and special needs transportation—from deep cuts. It includes funding for the green transportation initiatives to move Washington state toward cleaner, more sustainable ways of moving people and goods. That funding includes \$600,000 for Washington State University to give technical assistance to public agencies making the switch, \$12 million in capital grants to transit agencies, and a sales tax break for new and used electric vehicles.

Many of the construction, maintenance and preservation projects funded by the transportation budget are delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

[Click here](#) for Supplemental Transportation Budget graphics, reports, project maps and documents.

