



May 2020

## 2020 Legislative Session Report

Dear friends and neighbors,

We continue to adjust to a new, challenging reality since the 2020 legislative session concluded on March 12<sup>th</sup>. I am providing this report for those looking for detail on bills we passed in the supplemental session. This includes the bills that I was proud to sponsor, a summary of supplemental budgets and other bills that may be of interest to you in areas that support our health, education, and environment.

There are no easy or quick paths out of this current crisis. We are all experiencing the impacts of a continued strain on our economy, families and healthcare system. All levels of government in our state are working hard to provide resources and to find the best services to support all Washingtonians.

We know that by staying home we have flattened the curve of healthcare capacity. Where we have serious needs, we've seen an inspiring outpouring of compassion, support and can-do spirit of our communities to help our neighbors, frontline responders, essential workers and those most vulnerable to the virus.

We will weather this storm, and despite the uncertainty, we know that our community is strong. Resilience is in the DNA of Washingtonians. We recognize that being smart and data-driven with our decisions is how we can get through this and we have made significant progress. We will see the other side of this if we work together.

In partnership and gratitude,

**STATE REP. VANDANA SLATTER**  
**48<sup>TH</sup> LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT**



## Four of my bills were enacted into law



### **Transcript holds: [HB 2513](#)**

Low-income students are most affected by policies that allow institutions of higher education to withhold transcripts. Students shouldn't lose access to jobs or other opportunities simply for unpaid parking fees at their college. This bill takes down another barrier preventing equal access to opportunity.

### **Tele-Behavioral Health Call Center/Psychiatry Consultation Line: [HB 2728](#)**

This legislation ensures a stable, long-term funding source for a number of dedicated telehealth lines that our state uses to make mental health services accessible to more people throughout Washington.

### **Job title reporting to track our education and training programs: [HB 2308](#)**

This bill requires employers to include occupational data or job titles in their quarterly tax reports to ESD. This information will be kept confidential but will help track educational and certification workforce placements and provide better information to workers, as well as students making decisions about education and training. Gathering accurate occupational data to evaluate the effectiveness of our training programs will help students land good jobs.



### **Updating the State's Greenhouse Gas Targets: [HB 2311](#)**

Washington hasn't updated the state greenhouse gas (GHG) emission targets since 2008. HB 2311 does so, by setting a zero-emissions by 2050 goal, requires state agencies to set both short- and long-term goals for reducing emissions, and establishes carbon capture and sequestration as a state policy. Updating GHG targets will keep Washington at the lead in implementing good environmental policy for a cleaner future.



## COVID-19 Response

### *Ensuring resources as we all face this crisis together*

*COVID-19 completely upended our state, leaving hundreds of thousands struggling. We passed bipartisan legislation to help the government prepare for the struggles many would have and allow for a flexible response to help flatten the curve and keep people alive.*

#### **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.



## Supplemental Operating Budget

State budgets are enacted for a two-year period, but state law requires the operating budget passed by the Legislature be balanced **both** over the two-year biennium **and** the ensuing biennium (often called the “Outlook biennium”).

When the Legislature passed the 2020 supplemental operating budget in March, the **Four-Year Outlook showed the following ESTIMATED PROJECTIONS:**

### For the 2019-21 biennium

- Unrestricted ending fund balance for the Near-General Fund: \$918 million
- Rainy Day Fund ending balance: \$2.1 billion
- Total reserves: \$3 billion
  - **After the Governor’s vetoes:**
    - Unrestricted ending fund balance for the Near-General Fund: \$1.15 billion
    - Total reserves: \$3.2 billion

### For the 2021-23 biennium

- Unrestricted ending fund balance for the Near-General Fund: \$859 million
- Rainy Day Fund ending balance: \$2.7 billion
- Total reserves: \$3.6 billion
  - **After the Governor’s vetoes:**
    - Unrestricted ending fund balance for the Near-General Fund: \$1.3 billion
    - Total reserves: \$4 billion

(For more information on the Supplemental Operating Budget, go to <http://fiscal.wa.gov/BudgetOBillsEnacted.aspx>)

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 like housing and homelessness, childcare, health care access and COVID-19 response:

- ***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.

- **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.
- **Other 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.
- **Long-Term Care & DD**  
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.
- **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.
- **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.
- **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.





## Supplemental Transportation Budget

Lawmakers worked with Gov. Jay Inslee to craft a transportation budget that dealt with the aftermath of Initiative 976, which cut state transportation revenue by almost half a billion dollars.

The budget that passed protected the most vulnerable – including rural mass transit and special needs transportation – from deep cuts. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has become a bigger challenge than I-976.

In the new budget, there's full 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.



But the projects funded by the transportation budget will be delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and the governor's Stay Home, Stay Healthy order. It's unknown how much of the spring and summer construction season might be lost. Along with construction projects, the state Department of Transportation is putting on hold a significant amount of maintenance and preservation work until the pandemic is over.

(For more information on the Supplemental Transportation Budget, go to <http://fiscal.wa.gov/BudgetTBillsEnacted.aspx>)

## Affordable Housing & Homelessness

### *Build Stability, Build More & Build Better*

*We believe in fairness: promoting policies that seek to break down the forces that disrupt people's lives and make our communities unstable by exacerbating the risk of homelessness and preventing people from obtaining housing.*

#### **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.

**Ensuring affordable housing remains permanently affordable: [HB 2384](#)**

Recognizing that housing is a life-sustaining necessity, this legislation modifies the tax exemption for nonprofits that provide affordable housing in order to reduce expenses and ensure that the nonprofits won't be penalized when their tenants earn a bit more as they become more financially stable.

**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.

**Extending the Multifamily Housing Tax Exemption: [HB 2950](#)**

This measure extends the Multifamily Housing Tax Exemption (MFTE) until January 1, 2022, for certain properties currently receiving a twelve-year exemption. Providing a temporary law as a stopgap measure will make sure that people who live in buildings whose MFTE will soon expire don't lose their homes until the legislature can resume its consideration of whether and how to provide a longer term extension of the MFTE in the 2021 session.

**Expanding use of the affordable housing property tax levy to include affordable homeownership and foreclosure prevention: [SB 6212](#)**

It is becoming more and more expensive for homeowners to keep their homes, especially for people living on fixed incomes. This new law will allow more homeowners to benefit from funds raised by the affordable housing property tax levy by including affordable homeownership and foreclosure prevention as allowable uses by jurisdictions. It allows counties, cities, and towns to exceed the statutory property tax limitations.

**14-day pay or vacate notice for eviction for nonpayment of rent trailer bill: [SB 6378](#)**

Nonpayment of rent is a leading cause of eviction, and evictions are a leading cause of homelessness. Many people just need a little bit more time to earn another paycheck in order to pay rent. Legislation passed in 2019 (SB 5600) gives them that ability. Bad actors in the landlord community did not follow the spirit of that law, so this bill solidifies the new tenant protections.



## Healthy Communities & Healthy Families

### *Securing access to affordable health care for all communities*

*Accessible, affordable health care is a right that House Democrats have fought to secure for the people of Washington. To help our communities stay healthy, we passed policies to improve transparency, reduce costs, and expand access to our health care system.*

#### **Limiting out-of-pocket expenses for insulin: [SB 6087](#)**

Access to insulin is a matter of life and death, and the price of this life-saving medication has tripled in the last three years. The cost of insulin should no longer prevent people from taking it as prescribed. With this bill, a 30-day insulin supply cannot exceed \$100.



#### **Establishing Health Care Cost Transparency Board: [HB 2457](#)**

Health care costs leave too many people in Washington struggling to maintain both their health and finances. The Health Care Cost Transparency Board will annually calculate total health care spending and establish a benchmark for growth in our state. The Board will help us figure out where the money is going in our longer-term solution to make sure that we are spending in the right places.

#### **Requiring suicide prevention information on school ID cards: [HB 2589](#)**

This bill requires public K-12 schools and higher education institutions to include contact information for suicide prevention organizations on student and staff ID cards. Students have requested this information, and many districts do not have the professional tools or capacity to help all students who need it. This information will provide crucial mental health support for Washington students.





# Education

## *Providing opportunities to learn for ALL students*

*All students deserve the opportunity to learn. We passed bills to make sure that students in kindergarten through higher education have access to the tools they need to succeed.*

### **Innovative learning pilot:** [SB 6521](#)

Mastery- and work-based learning programs provide innovative and individualized educational opportunities that connect students to their communities and provide career pathways. This pilot hopes to help fix a funding formula that penalizes schools for students that spend time learning in internships outside school buildings.

### **Apprenticeship materials for dual credit scholarship programs:** [SB 6374](#)

Adds the cost of apprenticeship materials to the Running Start scholarship provided under the Washington Dual Enrollment Scholarship Pilot Program.

### **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.



### **Environmental Sustainability Education Curriculum:** [HB 2811](#)

Requires OSPI and the Legislature to develop a curriculum that educators can use to teach integrated, equitable, locally relevant, real-world environmental science. Emphasis will also be placed on teaching students more about renewable natural resource career opportunities.

### **Running Start summer pilot project:** [HB 2864](#)

Dual credit programs like Running Start are a great opportunity for high school students to be challenged and earn college credits. By offering Running Start during the summer quarter, students can try a college course without the pressure of the regular school year, or make up credits they need to graduate. At the same time, this helps community colleges, which typically have lower enrollment during the summer quarter.

### **SEBB coverage eligibility:** [SB 6189](#)

In 2017, the Legislature created the School Employees Benefits Board, to make sure that all our state's school employees have access to high-quality, affordable health care. Now that it has been implemented, it is time to evaluate if the eligibility requirements are working for the state, districts, and employees.



## Equitable & Effective Government

### *Supporting Open, Accountable, Equitable, and Efficient Government*

*Washingtonians expect government that is open, accountable, equitable, and efficient in helping those who need it. This session, we worked to help state, local, and municipal governments better serve their residents.*

#### **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.



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## Environmental Stewardship & Climate Change

### *Protecting our air and water, and moving to a clean energy future*

*Democrats are building on our successes as we move to a clean energy future with a 100 percent clean energy grid.*

#### **The Reusable Bag Act: [SB 5323](#)**

Reduces pollution by prohibiting single-use plastic bags in retail stores throughout the state. It allows retailers — including grocers — to provide paper or durable plastic bags for 8 cents each. Those using SNAP, TANF, WIC, or FAP are not subject to the charge. Supported by retailers, pulp and paper industry, and environmentalists. Received bipartisan support in both chambers.

#### **Increasing Available Zero Emission Vehicles: [SB 5811](#)**

This bill requires automakers to sell a higher percentage of zero emission vehicles in Washington. It helps address our transportation emissions and gives consumers more choices when buying an electric vehicle.