



May 2020

## 2020 Session Comprehensive Report

Dear friends and neighbors,

Thank you for following the Stay Home, Stay Healthy order as we continue weathering this pandemic. The latest reports from the [Department of Health](#) show that our collective efforts have not been in vain, since there's a marked decrease in confirmed cases and deaths. The governor extended the order throughout May and rolled out a [phased, data-driven approach](#) to minimize the risk of contagion as we open up the state so we can safely go back to our normal lives. You can check out the [data dashboard here](#) and read more about [the plan in its entirety here](#).

I recently mailed a print newsletter to households across the 19<sup>th</sup> district. [Click here](#) if you did not receive it or if you'd rather read it online. While that newsletter included legislation I sponsored, due to size restrictions I was unable to cover many other things accomplished in Olympia this session, which is why I prepared this comprehensive report. It includes our COVID-19 response, some of the most important bills we passed, and information on the supplemental budgets with links to detailed data and specific projects funded.

This virus has redefined how we go about our days and the way we relate to each other. But it has also brought us closer as we realize more and more that to win this war, we have to fight it together.

Stay healthy,

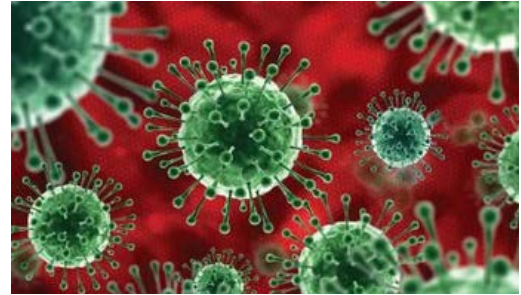
**REP. BRIAN BLAKE**  
**19TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT**



## COVID-19 Response

### **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 and \$25 million in federal funds 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 Shared Leave Flexibility: [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

### **Establishing a task force on improving institutional education programs and outcomes: [HB 2116](#)**

Every year, thousands of young people in Washington receive an education inside of correctional institutions like juvenile detention, rehabilitation facilities, or county jails. Strong supportive services during incarceration and re-entry can lower recidivism and improve the educational outcomes for some of our most vulnerable youth. This task force will examine the system of institutional education and make recommendations for improvements to ensure that these students have the opportunity to succeed.

### **Hunger-Free Schools Act: [HB 2660](#)**

Ensures the availability of breakfasts and lunches for over 7,000 students at 15 Washington schools—at no cost to the state. The federal government will fund school meals at no charge for schools with high numbers of low-income students through the Community Eligibility

Provision (CEP). This bill requires schools that would break even with CEP to participate in the program, moving Washington forward on the path toward food security for Washington kids.

**Suicide prevention organization information on school ID cards: [HB 2589](#)**

Suicide is the second leading cause of death for youth ages 15 to 19, and access to suicide prevention resources can save lives. This bill requires all public schools and public institutions of higher education to print contact information for one national suicide prevention organization and one local organization specializing in suicide prevention or crisis intervention. This sensible, bipartisan solution will put crisis resources directly into the hands of young people who need them.

**Reporting of student head injury information sustained during athletics and other activities: [HB 2731](#)**

While we know that head injuries are a serious problem in youth athletics, we don't have good data about when they occur. Requiring schools to report concussions sustained during youth athletics and activities will give policymakers and educators the tools they need to make well-informed decisions to keep students safe.

**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.



## Equitable and Effective Government

**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.

**Transparency and Accountability for Special Purpose Districts: [HB 2588](#)**

Ensuring that the operation of special purpose districts is open and accountable by creating penalties on districts that fail to disclose how taxpayer money is spent. If districts fail to file financial reports with the State Auditor, the county may withhold the tax funds collected and decide if it wants to directly provide the services. Taxpayers should be able to know where their tax dollars go, and whether their commissioners are complying with state financial laws. Most districts do a good job complying with the law, enough don't that action was needed to

protect taxpayers. If districts don't comply, they should face penalties. Transparency and accountability are vital to ensure no misappropriations of funds takes place.

**Protecting Washington's Election Security System: [HB 1251](#)**

With this new law, we'll protect Washington's election security system from cyber-attacks and prepare state and local officials for possible election interference. The Secretary of State, the Attorney General and Chief Information Officer will consult with county auditors to identify instances of security breaches in election systems and determine whether their sources are foreign or domestic entities. The Secretary of State will also report the occurrence of security breaches to the Legislature and provide recommendations for improvement.



**Accountability and transparency in government contracting: [HB 1521](#)**

Ensures that state agencies evaluate the full costs of contracting out a job. Additionally, the bill puts evaluation and enforcement mechanisms into place to ensure the quality and accountability of work that is contracted out.



## Environment

**Labeling of Disposable Wipes: [HB 2565](#)**

There's not much regulation about what can and can't be labeled as flushable. So-called "flushable" wipes take a messy and expensive toll on septic systems and public waste systems. This simply requires things that are labeled flushable are actually flushable.

**Chehalis Basin Financing: [HB 1154](#)**

An innovative model for solving similar problems with flooding and habitat issues throughout the state. Authorizes the issuance of up to \$700 million in state bonds to finance Chehalis Basin flood damage reduction and aquatic species habitat restoration, phased in over 10 biennia beginning in 2021-23.

**Low-Water Landscaping: [HB 1165](#)**

Encouraging low-water landscaping practices as a drought-fighting tool by removing restrictions placed by HOAs on owners and for state projects to pursue national standards for water conservation.



## Health Care

### **Limiting out-of-pocket expenses for 30-day insulin supply to \$100: [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.



### **Improving patient safety at psychiatric hospitals: [HB 2426](#)**

Patients at psychiatric hospitals are vulnerable to mistreatment and abuse. This bill improves oversight and accountability at psychiatric hospitals to increase patient safety and improve transparency, opening the door to better protections for all people who receive care in our health care system.

### **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. HB 2457 establishes the Health Care Cost Transparency Board to 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.



## Housing and Homelessness

### **Expands the use of the affordable housing property tax levy to include affordable homeownership and foreclosure prevention: [SB 6212](#) ([HB 2489](#))**

It is becoming more and more expensive for homeowners to keep their homes, especially for people living on fixed incomes. This 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.

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

The legislation modifies the income thresholds for low-income tenants in order for nonprofits to retain their property tax exemption when providing affordable housing. This ensures that the nonprofits won't be penalized when their tenants earn more and become more financially stable. Housing is a life-sustaining necessity and tenants should not be punished with an

unaffordable rent cliff when they make a few more bucks in their paycheck.

**Grace period for late fees: [HB 2535](#)**

Rents are rising much faster than wages, putting more people at risk of being overburdened by the cost of rent. This bill strikes a balance in recognizing both, that housing is a life-sustaining necessity, and that landlords have legitimate business interests that need to be protected. It prohibits a landlord from charging late fees for past due rent unless the rent is at least five days past due. However, if the rent is more than five days past due, the landlord may charge late fees commencing from the first day after the due date until paid, and the landlord may serve a notice to pay rent or vacate at any point after the rent becomes due.



**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.

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**Activating surplus public property from school districts for the construction of affordable housing: [HB 2617](#)**

Surplus public property is a great tool to acquire undeveloped or underdeveloped land for permanent affordable housing. This bill lets school districts dispose of property in a way that ensures it will truly be “permanent” affordable housing.

Without the changes made by this new law, contracts were required to include provisions for the taking back of land by school districts.

**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.



## Safe and Secure Communities

### **Mental Health for Law Enforcement Professionals:** [HB 2926](#), [SB 6570](#)

The Legislature passed a pair of bills seeking to expand access to stress management and mental health programs for law enforcement officers. Critical incident stress management (CISM) programs are designed to address the trauma and stress that can occur to law enforcement and corrections officers in the line of duty. These can include peer support counseling, crisis intervention, traumatic incident reduction, and stress management.

- **HB 2926** requires the Criminal Justice Training Commission to create an inventory of CISM programs and work to expand law enforcement access to them.
- **SB 6570** creates three pilot projects for law enforcement behavioral health and suicide prevention as well as creating a task force to study law enforcement mental health and wellness.



We owe a massive debt to our law enforcement and corrections officers. These bills will help ensure they get the help they need to keep protecting us.

### **Combatting “Swatting”:** [HB 2632](#)

“Swatting” is a harassment technique where a false report of a hostage situation or violent crime results in an aggressive police response to an innocent victim’s residence or place of work. This is not a prank; it is a malicious crime that is traumatizing, dangerous, and breeds mistrust of law enforcement. This bill makes this kind of false report a felony, which will allow police to commit resources and time to investigating these crimes.

### **Reforming Community Supervision:** [HB 2393](#), [HB 2394](#), [HB 2417](#)

Based on recommendations from the Criminal Sentencing Task Force, we passed three bills aimed at making community supervision, the portion of an offender’s sentence that comes after someone has been released from jail or prison, more streamlined and effective.

- **HB 2393**, called “Compliance Credit,” rewards people on supervision for complying with all their conditions by allowing them to earn credits to reduce their period of supervision;
- **HB 2394**, the so-called “Concurrent Community Custody” bill intensifies supervision for those being supervised for multiple offenses, ensuring that they comply with all conditions for all of their offenses at the same time, rather than having terms of confinement always run consecutively; and
- **HB 2417** reforms “Swift and Certain” sanctions for people who violate the conditions of their community supervision, ensuring that minor violations are treated as truly minor and that major violations result in re-incarceration to protect public safety.

These three changes will allow people on community supervision to re-integrate more successfully into society and cut down on recidivism.



## Supporting Washington's Workforce

### **Establishing minimum crew size on certain trains: [HB 1841](#)**

This bill makes public safety a priority by establishing minimum crew size requirements on freight and passenger trains to effectively respond to emergencies. It also authorizes the Utilities and Transportation Commission to issue monetary penalties for violations and establish higher crew minimums for high-risk railroad carriers. The bill had an emergency clause, which was vetoed by the governor.

### **Commissions earned, commissions paid: [HB 2474](#)**

This bill ensures that workers get paid earned commissions and bonuses regardless of whether they're still with the company or have moved on. Failure to do so is a wage payment violation.

### **Ensuring fair workplace standards: [SB 6096](#)**

In the public sector, we take seriously our responsibility to make sure state contractors are adhering to fair workplace standards. This bill requires DSHS to consider the potential for labor law violations when contracting with service providers. This means that, in order to contract with the state, businesses have to respect employees' rights under the law.

### **Independent medical examination reform: [SB 6440](#) ([HB 2689](#))**

Too often, both employers and the Department of Labor and Industries require unnecessary independent medical exams (IMEs) for injured workers trying to heal and return to work. The burdens these IMEs often generate for workers include long-distance travel, medical examinations that may be painful and invasive, too many examinations, and emotional distress due to repeatedly recounting traumatic injuries. This bill reduces these hardships by limiting how often IMEs can be requested when other sufficient medical information is available.



### **Ensuring the intent of workers' compensation system is honored: [HB 2409](#)**

Third-party administrators are supposed to provide case management expertise for self-insured employers and Retrospective Rating program participants. Unfortunately, they are often used to suppress workers' compensation claims and undermine injured workers' ability to get the wage replacement and medical benefits they are due. This bill modernizes industrial insurance employer penalties, which is long overdue, since they have not been



updated since 1985, and specifies that employers have a responsibility for fair conduct toward their workers.

**Protecting long-term care workers:** [SB 6205](#) ([HB 2681](#))

This bill provides basic safeguards for long-term caregivers to protect them from harassment, abuse and discrimination. This will allow them to know what to expect and what to do if/when an incident occurs.

**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 works. If a caregiver's employer changes her schedule and she must quit her job because she can't find childcare during her new work hours, that is considered a "voluntary" quit and she does not qualify for unemployment insurance. This is the first step toward fixing 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.



## 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 matched 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.
- **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 DNR, 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.

