



May 2020

2020 Session Comprehensive Report

Dear friends and neighbors,

I am grateful and proud of our community for making the effort and, in some cases, the sacrifice of following the Stay Home, Stay Healthy order as we continue weathering this pandemic. It's working; the latest reports from the [Department of Health](#) show a marked decrease in the epidemiologic curves of both, confirmed cases and deaths. The governor extended the order throughout May, but he also 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.

My seatmate, Rep. Lisa Callan, and I recently mailed a legislative review print newsletter to households across the 5th district. [Click here](#) if you did not receive it or if you'd rather read it online. While that newsletter included legislation I sponsored or co-sponsored, due to size restrictions we were unable to cover many other things accomplished in Olympia this session. In this comprehensive report you'll find our COVID-19 response, as well as some of the bills we passed in areas that support housing, the environment, our workforce, equitable government and healthy families. There's also information on the supplemental budgets with links where you can explore detailed data and specific projects funded.

The coronavirus has affected all of us. It's 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.

In partnership and service,

REP. BILL RAMOS
5TH 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 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.

Affordable Housing & Homelessness

EVERYONE DESERVES SHELTER, STABILITY AND SAFETY

Paying 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 streamlines the process to deliver desperately needed affordable housing faster.

Environmental Stewardship & Climate Change

PROTECTING OUR AIR AND WATER, AND MOVING TOWARD A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

The Reusable Bag Act: [SB 5323](#) ([HB 1205](#))

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.



Suction Dredge Mining: [HB 1261](#)

Salmon numbers have been declining and Washington needs to continue to take strong action to improve their habitat and boost recovery. Protecting their spawning habitat is vital to this effort. Recreational suction mining significantly damages these areas by interfering with salmon conservation efforts, increasing silt in the water causing higher temperatures that choke off young salmon, and stirs up mercury which causes illness in fish. HB 1261 protects salmon habitat by banning this practice.

Supporting Washington's Workforce

PROTECTING FAMILIES, GENERATING QUALITY JOBS AND BUILDING THRIVING COMMUNITIES

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.



Ensuring 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.

Equitable & Effective Government

SUPPORTING OPEN, ACCOUNTABLE, EQUITABLE, AND EFFICIENT 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.

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.



Improving the Growth Management Act Planning Process for Counties: [HB 2342](#)

HB 2342 gives counties the necessary time they need to plan for updates to their comprehensive plan. This bill changes the date for when plans are required to be submitted so that counties will have more time to review census data and state forecasts, improving their response to growth management.

Healthy Communities, Healthy Families
SECURING ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE HEALTH CARE

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.



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.