

Health Care is a Human Right - WA 2022 Policy Platform

Adopted at December 15, 2021 General Meeting

Framework

Goals guiding our work for 2022. *We propose that HCHR focus on the same goals as in the 2021 session, with two changes - to specifically address the role of profit in escalating health costs, and to refocus defensive work given the improving outlook.*

- Make progress towards universal health care in WA State and our nation
- Improve health care affordability and access, while driving down escalating industry profits
- Advance racial equity and address social determinants of health and disparities
- Ensure that no one loses access to care and strengthen existing programs (Medicare, Medicaid, Public Health, ACA, Indian Health Service, Veterans Administration, Community Health Centers, reproductive rights . . .)

Criteria to consider when “filtering” bills/budget items. *As in the 2021 session, we propose that HCHR adopt a high-level platform that includes our key expected priorities for the year while allowing HCHR to respond nimbly to specific policy vehicles as they develop. We suggest that HCHR Policy and Steering Committee members continue to use these “filtering questions” to guide decision-making as specific items emerge, with one change to clarify that an HCHR member must be “working” the issue.*

- Does the issue enhance/support the mission/goals of HCHR?
 - Does this issue advance equity and/or move Washington towards universal coverage?
 - Does the issue have a critical mass of advocates/legislators?
 - Does the issue have a core leadership of organizations within HCHR that have a clear and realistic strategy for how they’re going to pass the bill?
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The 2022 Platform

*The following platform includes examples to anchor our conversation, but in many instances, we have not yet seen a specific bill or budget language. We anticipate that items may be refined in **alignment** with our goals and filtering criteria.*

*Note: Where an item may meet more than one of HCHR’s goals, it is annotated with an asterisk.**

State Legislative Agenda See how the filtering criteria were used to select these examples [here](#).

Make progress towards universal health care

- Advance immigrant health equity* (Example: Pursue funding for 2024 state immigrant coverage program)
- Improve Medicare affordability and access* (Example: Address Medicare Cliff affordability)

Improve health care affordability and access, while driving down escalating industry profits

- Support efforts to build and retain Washington’s health care workforce and tackle racial inequities by addressing working conditions, pay, and training
- Support prescription drug affordability (Example: Prescription Drug Affordability Board)

- Protect against surprise medical bills (Example: *Support OIC-request to maintain stronger surprise billing protections in state law than federal*)
- Address health care industry consolidation and monopolies* (Example: *Keep Our Care Act bill to regulate mergers and acquisitions*)

Advance racial equity and address social determinants of health and disparities

- Expand diverse provider workforce and opportunities for advancement, including entry/mid-level opportunities, community-based care, and worker supports (Example: *Dental therapy*)
- Strengthen the behavioral health system (Example: *TBD, may relate to Blake decision*)
- Support progressive revenue to balance our tax code (Example: *Billionaire's tax*)

Federal Congressional Agenda

Make progress towards universal health care

- State-Based Universal Health Care Act ([HR 3775](#), S. pending)
- National Single-payer – Improved Medicare for All ([HR 1976](#), S. pending)

Improve health care affordability and access while driving down escalating industry profits

- Enable Medicare to negotiate drug prices (*May be covered by final Build Back Better [BBB] bill*)
- Maintain subsidies created by the American Rescue Plan Act (*BBB?*)
- Add an out-of-pocket maximum on Medicare cost-sharing (*BBB?*)

Advance racial equity and address social determinants of health and disparities

- Prioritize equitable interventions for Black, Indigenous, and people of color, including maternal health policy solutions (*BBB?*)
- Invest in-home and community-based services (*BBB?*)

Ensure that no one loses access to care and strengthen existing programs

- Expand health care to immigrants by enabling access to federal programs, regardless of citizenship*
- Close the Medicaid coverage gap (*BBB?*)
- Expand Medicare to include dental, vision, and hearing benefits (*BBB?*)
- Lower the Medicare eligibility age to at least 55

Ongoing Non-Legislative Priority Areas

- Pursue universal coverage through Washington State's Universal Health Care Commission
- Monitor consumer cost impacts from Washington State's Health Care Cost Transparency Board
- Support and increase leadership presence and opportunities for communities of color in health care both in private sector and public governance
- Continue to monitor and promote health care access during the pandemic and through the wind-down of the public health emergency