



2022 Legislative Agenda

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Centering Equity at WWU

The ASWWU recognizes the rights of students to feel safe and supported in higher education, and that Western as a campus and institution must do more to create a campus climate that is safe and inclusive for all students, especially those that are historically most marginalized in our community. Centering equity is to acknowledge that students with the lived experience of marginalization within higher education is a microcosm of the political structure of our government, and we as students strongly advocate for access and accommodations for these communities.

Western is in support of the Washington Roundtable's goal of 70% of Washington high school graduates earning a post-secondary credential by 2030, and asks the Legislature to focus on barriers to access and completion of BIPOC, LGBTQ+, disabled, undocumented, and other historically underrepresented students in higher education.

Health Accessibility

The ASWWU recognizes the right, for all communities on and off WWU's campus, to have equitable access to affordable health care and services. Members of marginalized communities, specifically BIPOC, LGBTQ+, undocumented, and disabled communities are disproportionately affected by adverse health outcomes. The COVID-19 pandemic has increased the growing pressure these individuals carry. However, these communities lack the necessary resources to survive in the current atmosphere without incurring significant repercussions. Legislation must proactively address the needs of these communities regardless of their race/ethnicity, socioeconomic status, immigration status, sexuality, and/or gender identity. Traumatic experiences with healthcare systems have created barriers such as distrust, fear of discrimination, and increased stigma. Additionally, inequities in socioeconomic status and health insurance are large factors in the quality of care provided. These are both factors that are prevalent in our target communities.

To increase the trust of these marginalized communities, information about changes to their health care and protection for services they are looking for is necessary.

Therefore, the ASWWU asks that the legislature support:

- **HB 1851:** This bill would authorize more health care providers to perform abortions and prohibit the state from penalizing any pregnant individual or approved healthcare provider for the outcome of an abortion.

 - *This legislation would grant specific statutory authorization for physician assistants, advanced registered nurse practitioners and certain other providers acting within their scopes of practice to perform abortions, the state would be taking crucial steps to ensure access to healthcare. This bill would also prohibit the state from acting against an individual based on pregnancy outcomes or for assisting a pregnant individual in exercising the right to reproductive freedom*
 - *ASWWU advocates for this bill as it applies to our student's ability to have access and autonomy with decisions impacting their livelihood and futures with this as a resource.*
- **SB 5723:** This bill would require Washington state to increase the quality and comprehensiveness of drug clinical trial data concerning underrepresented demographics collected, reported, and analyzed; identify the barriers for underrepresented demographics' participation in clinical trials and apply strategies recognized by the United States Food and Drug Administration to increase participation; and improve the availability and transparency of the data regarding demographic groups collected, reported, and analyzed.

 - *By requiring diversity within clinical trials, the state would be taking steps to ensure that results of clinical trials more accurately reflect how a drug would be metabolized amongst participants of different races, ages, and genders. Adopting policies for identifying and recruiting participants from underrepresented demographic groups would help improve the diversity amongst participants.*
 - *Access to appropriate and effective healthcare should be available to all Washington residents, no matter their income, race, age, gender, or location of residence. Increasing diversity in clinical trials would move the state one step closer to ensuring that prescribed treatments and medications are appropriate for each patient.*
- **HB 1622:** This bill would allocate funding to train and certify more nursing students in Washington state to become SANEs (Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners) to assist survivors of sexual assault in rural and underserved areas.

 - *In rural and underserved areas, there is a disproportionate lack of SANE nurses to assist survivors of a sexual assault in a trauma-informed manner. SANE nurses are trained and equipped to conduct forensic examinations to assess for trauma and gather evidence. In Washington state, there are very few avenues for nurses to become SANE certified. Oftentimes, survivors of sexual assault may have to wait hours before being attended to by a nurse examiner.*

- This legislation would establish a SANE training program within Washington State University to offer nursing students with the opportunity to obtain this credential. By ensuring that this certification is more readily available, and that nursing students are appropriately trained and equipped to assist survivors of sexual assault, Washington will have more qualified individuals to assist survivors of sexual assault.

- The ASWWU advocates for this bill because younger people (people under 30) are at the highest risk of sexual violence according to Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) and the Department of Justice. With many students that attend Western being in this group demographic from throughout the state of Washington, both rural and urban, we ask for more funding and support for this bill.

Incarcerated Populations

Historically, incarcerated individuals are disproportionately marginalized communities, such as BIPOC and intellectually and developmentally disabled individuals (IDD). This is due the systemic marginalization these communities cannot avoid or escape. While work is being done to put an end to these discriminatory behaviors, these individuals are still in prison, a place where they will often be treated less than human, considerably more than they already are. The ASWWU recognizes incarcerated individuals and their need for increased human rights. Currently, these people are being treated, not with the intent of rehabilitating them back into society, but the idea they will never change and will always be criminals. Behaviors such as this continue to uphold the system that prevents them from creating better lives for themselves, regardless of if they are incarcerated or in society.

Therefore, the ASWWU asks that the legislature support:

- Future measures, similar to **HB 1756**, that would restrict the use of long-term solitary confinement in Washington state prisons.
 - Currently, state correctional facilities currently hold almost 600 individuals in solitary confinement in Washington. This practice has been shown to have devastating and lasting psychological impacts and those directly released into the community from solitary confinement are more likely to reoffend. This bill would have limited the time any person can be placed into solitary to 14-days, with a 45-day cap annually to avoid cycling people in and out. It is past time to eliminate the use of solitary confinement as it would result in better health for incarcerated people, prison staff, and the community.
 - Unfortunately, this bill died. In the future, if bills similar to this are presented, ASWWU would like to see actions made to support and pass them into law.
- Funding in the Governor's Budget [page 73] to implement voting in up to 10 counties to expand voter registration and voting within county jails for the 2022 primary and general elections.
 - Funding provided to these counties would be used to develop and implement plans to increase voting among incarcerated individuals, create voting materials specific to these individuals, purchase voting supplies and equipment, and hire additional staff for voting activities.
 - The ASWWU urges the House and Senate to adopt and pass the jail voting budget proviso that is included in the Governor's budget in their respective budgets.

Equity & Justice

The ASWWU recognizes the right to fair and accurate measures when achieving justice. Feminine presenting individuals, specifically Black and Indigenous feminine presenting individuals, are disproportionately affected by human trafficking, humans' rights violations, and sexual assault. As of 2016, the National Crime Information Center has reported over 5000 cases of missing Indigenous feminine presenting people and youth. This is unacceptable. There must be necessary actions taken to prevent crimes like these from continuing.

Therefore, the ASWWU asks that the legislature support:

- **SB 5612:** This bill would help to ensure that survivors of domestic abuse and/or sexual assault are given opportunities to speak at conviction trials of their assaulters.
 - This would grant survivors of DV and/or SA the ability to provide testimony in a separate secure room to ensure they don't have to interact with the defendant and/or the relatives/friends of the defendant. This bill would also ensure that victims of domestic abuse receive immediate medical attention and are not detained for unreasonably long periods of time.
 - Oftentimes, the reporting and filing of a DV/SA assault case is difficult and emotionally taxing for the survivor. This bill would seek to ensure that survivors of sexual assault could participate at conviction trials in a secure and safe environment.
- **SB 5597:** This bill would strengthen the Washington Voting Rights act and increase access to the vote regardless of income, race, location of residence, minority-language status, or other identity.
 - The Washington Voting Rights Act sought to “ensure that every voter has an equal opportunity to elect the candidate of their choice” through their vote. The WVRA helps empower local governments to improve their electoral systems to promote voter inclusion.
 - Nationwide, barriers to voting and voting suppression disenfranchise many people of color, low-income communities, and individuals with a felony in their past. The ASWWU supports measures to expand voting rights and access to the vote.
 - HB 5597 seeks to improve the WVRA by expanding protections by preventing race, ethnicity, or language-minority status from being used to determine access to vote. The bill seeks to strengthen language to protect those of historically and commonly disenfranchised identities
- **HB 1725:** This bill would seek to address the lack of resources for missing, murdered, or trafficked Indigenous persons.
 - This bill would create a missing Indigenous women and persons alert designation for endangered missing person advisory (EMPA) alerts. EMPA alerts are for those who do not qualify for AMBER alerts (which is designated for children). EMPA alerts would notify law enforcement and government agencies, television, and radio stations of missing people so agents may cooperate to recover the person.
 - According to the National Crime Information Center, there were 5,712 reports of missing American Indigenous and Alaska Native women and girls in 2016; however, the US Department of Justice's federal missing person database, NamUs, only logged 116 cases.
 - In Washington state, Indigenous women go missing at a rate more than four times higher than the state's white residents. There is a clear need for the state to ensure that resources and funding is allocated to prevent, and address the high rates of missing Indigenous women and persons in Washington.
- **HB 1571:** This bill would increase communications between county officials and the families of missing Indigenous people, while also providing grants to aid human trafficking survivors' rehabilitation efforts.
 - This bill would add requirements for county coroners and medical examiners regarding spiritual practices, contacting family members, and returning remains. Law enforcement officials would be required to learn about these traditions and customs, as well.
 - This bill would also require a Red Thunder Alert as a component of endangered missing persons advisory plan. If a missing person is later booked in a jail, families must be notified as to the person's whereabouts.

- We ask for support within congress for the Philippine Human Rights Act as it takes significant action to ensure accountability for human rights violations and reinforces human rights standards that have been repeatedly violated under Duterte's regime. This act:
 - Suspend U.S. security assistance to Armed Forces of the Philippines and Philippines (AFP) National Police (PNP);
 - Instructs U.S. representatives of multilateral development banks to veto loans to Philippine military and police.

Support for Undocumented and Mixed Status Families at WWU and Washington State

The ASWWU recognizes undocumented and mixed status families as individuals who have the right to benefits, regardless of their immigration status. These individuals are often refugees of war, or just trying to create a better life for themselves and their families. The ability to achieve citizenship is one of privilege that many cannot afford. This shouldn't bar them from receiving benefits. Especially considering these individuals were impacted to a great degree by the COVID-19 pandemic and the increase in unemployment.

Therefore, the ASWWU asks that the legislature support:

- Future measures similar to **SB 5438**, that would expand unemployment benefits to those who are unemployed due to the COVID-19 pandemic and are ineligible for unemployment benefits due to immigration status.
- Future measures similar to **HB 1191**, that would increase equity in healthcare by creating affordable health coverage options to all Washington State residents, regardless of immigration status. This bill would have created a state-funded program to cover immigrants who, due to their immigration status, are ineligible for federal Medicaid and Qualified Health and Dental Plans.
- In the future, if bills similar to this are presented, we would like to see actions made to support and pass them into law.

Resource and Infrastructure for Students

The ASWWU recognizes the need for increased student support services, as well as quality, sustainable, and affordable infrastructure that will allow students to complete their education. All students, regardless of their financial status, should be supported as they pursue higher education and should have access to affordable, sustainable energy options, affordable tuition and financial navigation services, and consistent broadband access. By increasing students' financial security and access to necessary infrastructure, college enrollment and completion rates would increase.

In Washington state, post-secondary enrollment has declined nearly 14% in the past two years as workforce needs in crucial employment sectors have only grown. First-generation students, students of color, and students with low-income backgrounds have unenrolled at disproportionately high rates. If Washington state seeks to build a robust and diverse workforce in years to come, investments in students and higher education are necessary. In ensuring that student support services and infrastructure are available to students, the legislature would be investing in the future of Washington's workforce.

Therefore, the ASWWU asks that the legislature support:

- **HB 1659**: This bill would increase Washington College Grant eligibility to ensure that more students are able to access financial aid assistance to pursue higher education. 1659 would also create bridge grants to allow students to cover non-tuition related expenses such as books, food, housing, technology, transportation, etc.

- Many low-income students at Western, and throughout the state, experience financial insecurities. In Fall 2019, 39% of Western Washington University students were reported as experiencing food insecurity; 49% were reported as experiencing housing insecurity, and 19% were reported as experiencing homelessness. "Bride Grants" would provide students with funds to help cover the costs of non-tuition expenses, such as food, housing, books, child care, and other necessities.

- Currently, the Washington College Grant is fully funded for students with a median family income at and below 55%. The Washington College Grant's sliding scale offers some support to students with higher MFIs; however, funding provided to these students is greatly reduced compared to those at 55% MFI. Students with MFIs from 55% to 70% share demonstrated levels of need within Washington state. Fully funding the Washington College Grant for students in this.

- **HB 1770:** This bill would strengthen building codes to ensure that they are energy efficient and meet statewide Greenhouse Gas emission targets.

-High-efficiency heating, ventilation, air conditioning, energy efficiency technologies, and renewable heating and cooling help reduce greenhouse gas emissions while, also saving money on heating and electricity

- In fall 2019, approximately 49% of Western students reported experiencing housing insecurity. This means that nearly half of Western students had been struggling to cover the costs of housing or had been staying in temporary housing situations. Many college students rent apartments or houses with poor heating, insulation, and efficiency, resulting in high energy costs.

- Passing HB 1770 would help alleviate some of these burdens that college students face. Not only would this support college students at Western, but many others in Washington state, as well as the long-term environment of our state.

- **HB 1723:** This bill would help close the digital divide by creating broadband assistance programs that allow low-income families to receive help in forms such as reduced cost of voice and broadband services.

- In fall 2022, a survey amongst Western students showed that 13.8% of respondents that identified as students of color had not had sufficient access to internet in the last 30 days. For college students, access to high-speed internet is crucial for conducting research, collaborating with peers and instructors, and completing assignments.

- HB 1723 would help remove barriers to accessing quick and affordable broadband internet services. This is crucial to removing the digital divide that exists in Washington state. With increased access to broadband, students, and many others, will be able to participate in their learning and work much more efficiently and effectively.

- **HB 1835/SB 5789:** These bills would establish student and family support services to assist students in navigating financial aid in Washington state, including FAFSA, WAFSA, and the Washington College Grant

- One key barrier to college enrollment and completion is a lack of awareness of grant and loan programs available to students. In Washington, there are low FAFSA completion rates despite a multitude of funding programs and resources available. Last year, Washington state ranked 49th in the nation in FAFSA completion amongst graduating high school seniors.

- Currently, FAFSA completion is necessary for Washington students to secure and receive funding from the Washington College Grant; however, there is limited awareness surrounding the Washington College Grant and how to access it. FAFSA completion is also correlative with higher rates of post-secondary enrollment, retention, and attainment.

- These bills would establish and fund programs and partnerships that assist in FAFSA completion and raise awareness of the Washington College Grant. Community partnerships, library assistance programs, and advertising to increase awareness would help ensure that more individuals are aware of their aid options and resources.

DOC Insert: Disabled Communities

COVID-19 has exacerbated difficulties world-wide for many different communities. The inability to work and create an income has left many without means to pay for rent, and unfortunately, become homeless. The disabled community has been adversely affected by the pandemic, many becoming unable to access food and housing resources, along with dealing with ableist mandates directly affecting them. By providing disabled communities with access to equitable housing and means to thrive in the work field, legislation can help these individuals overcome the obstacles hindering them from living successful lives.

Therefore, the ASWWU asks that the legislature support:

- **HB 1724:** This bill would ensure oversight and coordination of permanent supportive housing resources to ensure high quality housing opportunities for disabled individuals.
 - *This bill would add an operator of permanent supportive housing and services to the affordable housing advisory board. An advisory committee would also be created to support permanent supportive housing in the department of commerce.*
- **Future Measures similar to HB 1802,** that would have increased opportunities for disabled individuals to participate in policy processes in Washington state
 - *This bill would have ensured that disabled individuals be included in any statutory entity, such as a work group or advisory board, that centers on issues related to those with disabilities. At least three members, or 30% of the member body (whichever is higher) must be comprised of those with disabilities. This legislation would have also allowed disabled individuals the opportunity to include personal aides to assist them in participating in any statutory entity. Overall, this bill takes steps to ensure that disabled individuals can actively participate in the legislative process.*
 - *The ASWWU also supports the development of a report to identify how to remove barriers to access the legislative space in the future. Future training materials, accommodations, and alterations are necessary to ensure that disabled folks are able to access the legislative spaces.*
 - *Unfortunately, this bill died. In the future, if bills similar to this are presented, we would like to see actions made to support and pass them into law.*
- **SB 5790:** This bill would increase support for individuals with intellectual and developmental disabilities by providing programs and services such as healthcare and other basic needs.
 - *Would include increasing support for employment and community inclusion Medicaid rates for 2023 and be adjusted beginning 2024.*
 - *The Department of Social and Health Services would be required to establish a school to work program and statewide council to connect services provided by the developmental disability administration to high school students with IDD (intellectual and developmental disabilities).*
 - *List of students receiving special education services must be submitted to state agencies working with individuals with IDD at least three years before they leave the school system.*