

# SAIRC Legislative Priorities **DRAFT**

## (1) Support for Sexual Assault Survivors

(a) The Western community is greatly concerned with the frequency of sexual violence on campuses and how often these instances go unreported. While 1 in 5 womxn and 1 in 16 men are sexually assaulted while they are in college, only 10% of students report assaults due to personal or institutional barriers. This issue also disproportionately impacts transgender students, students with mental disabilities, black and/or Native American students and students facing poverty. We believe that more students will be able to access support with increased funding at the state level, which will promote a safer campus and community environment. We also believe that, as a whole, we have a responsibility to alleviate the burden faced by survivors of sexual assault as much as possible. Increased funding at the state level will permit universities to implement stronger and more effective support programs for survivors, creating campuses where survivors can complete their education with fewer roadblocks.

- Support HB 1002 (which modifies the offense of rape in the third degree) and 1016 (which concerns hospital notification of availability of sexual assault evidence kit collection), both of which have direct impact on survivors of sexual assault.
- Allocate resources so that specialized personnel, resources, and training for staff members can be implemented at universities leading to an improved ability to respond to sexual violence and involved parties.
- The development and implementation of a mandatory, state-wide training program for all university faculty, staff, and administration.
- Clarification and transparency surrounding the reporting process as well as readily available information of support services for survivors of sexual and domestic violence at the university and in our communities.

## (2) Civilian Oversight Boards

(a) Excess force by law enforcement affects all communities by fostering distrust and resentment. Not only are citizens deprived of their constitutional and human rights when subjected to excessive and often deadly force, their communities are likewise negatively impacted, resulting in decreased public safety and a virulent relationships between communities and law enforcement. Often times, abuses of power are not isolated incidents, but rather a symptom of systemic and institutional shortcomings. People of color, disabled people and the queer community all experience police violence at a disproportionate rate.

With this, we recommend:

- Adopt recommendations put forth by the Joint Legislative Task Force's requiring:
  - The establishment of meaningful police accountability structures that, among other things, ensures that there is a safe mechanism to submit formal complaints about officers
  - An objective investigation of those complaints is completed in a timely manner; makes findings; where there is a finding of misconduct, recommends appropriate discipline and/or training; and ensures that discipline is appropriately completed.
  - Requiring that all instances of deadly force be investigated by external bodies (outside the department employing the officer(s) involved) with investigative competency and sufficient resources; and providing oversight and funding through the Attorney General's Office.
  - Requiring law enforcement agencies to report the use of deadly force to the Attorney General's Office, and requiring the Attorney General's Office to collect data, on a standardized statewide basis, regarding the use of deadly force by law enforcement officers.

### (3) Sex Education in K-12

(a) Washington state sex education is currently not required for K-12 schools, and the curriculum used in schools that do choose to provide sex education does not teach about the importance of consent. Washington law on sexual health education states that “the decision as to whether or not a program about sexual health education is to be introduced into the common schools is a matter for determination at the district level by the local school board.” (WAC 392-410-140). We believe this does not prepare students for healthy sexual relationships both in high school and in their adult life. Improving sex education in high school will result in a more informed and ultimately safer college population.

- Improve and expand the Healthy Youth Act (RCW 28A.300.475) by including education on necessity of affirmative consent.
- Requiring comprehensive HIV and healthy sex education for all K-12 public schools in Washington State.
- Include mandatory discussion about LGBTQIA+ identities, sexualities and safe sex in non-heterosexual relationships.
- Expand the Healthy Youth Act to expand more on the idea of consent and why affirmative consent is necessary for any sexual encounter to take place. Simply requiring medically accurate information does not do enough to teach about the importance of consent for healthy relationships. The purpose of sex education is to teach about sex in a healthy, age-appropriate way that encourages students to be safe about their sexual health. By not including consent in curriculum, sex education is not meeting its intended goal.

#### (4) Menstrual Care Products

- (a) Menstrual products are something required for every person with a uterus and are still expensive, heavily-taxed as a luxury item and not readily available to all. Lack of access to these products unfairly burdens impoverished or homeless people with uteruses in our communities. Even those who can afford the products should not be forced to pay taxes on these necessities. See also that the term “feminine hygiene product” isn’t appropriate because having a uterus is not synonymous to being a female. People who do not identify as female experience menstrual bleeding and should not have to be misgendered when gaining access to these products.

With this, we recommend:

- Supporting the amendment of HB 1053 to be more inclusive. Change “feminine hygiene products” to “menstrual products”. Once this has been done, support the passage of HB 1053, which eliminates the undue burden of taxes for those who can afford menstrual products.
- Requiring free menstrual products on college campuses to lessen the burden on students.
- Mandate non-gendered discussion of menstruation in K-12 sexual education curriculum.

## (5) Rights for People with Mental Illnesses

(a) We're concerned with how mental illness and behavioral disorders are not being prioritized as they should. According to the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), LGBQ young people are more than twice as likely to feel suicidal, and over four times as likely to attempt suicide, compared to heterosexual youth. Additionally, one third of transgender youth have seriously considered suicide. Other groups (such as veterans, people of color, and womxn) are also disproportionately burdened with mental health disorders. We should be allocating more resources and paying more attention to the struggles of those faced with mental health challenges. Without providing more resources, we are knowingly increasing the hardships on those already struggling.

With this, we recommend:

- Supporting SB 5053, 5054, 5055, and 5056, all of which either promote more resources for people with mental illnesses or for those going into the behavioral health field, which will directly affect the population facing mental illnesses in the future.
- Allocate more resources to college campuses statewide, requiring detailed training in various types of mental illnesses, education on which groups are disproportionately affected and hiring counselors representative of said groups.
- Provide more funding to college counseling centers, which are overworked and often take weeks, if not months, to get into. Expand staff in order to ease the burden on students suffering from mental health crises and ensure that their needs are met in an appropriate amount of time.