

## **DOC – WILD AGENDA**

### **Expanded Access to Healthcare Resources**

People with disabilities have a high need for access to comprehensive healthcare services. Some of the areas that are of great concern are access to emergency services and mental health services. Given the lack of resources often available to people with disabilities, the need for affordable, easily accessible services is a high priority of Western's Disability Community. Better, more proactive access to care leads to an increase in both autonomy and overall quality of life for people with disabilities.

We advocate for the following:

- Passing HB 1065 & SB 5031 which prevents individuals from receiving surprise bills or balance bills for services provided at out-of-network facilities and removes consumer responsibility for managing contractual disputes between health insurance carriers and health care facilities/providers.
- Passing SB 5054 which will establish a reciprocity program so specific health professionals (such as chemical dependency professionals, mental health counselors, social workers) with licensure or certification in other states may also be able to work in Washington state.
- Introducing additional legislation that addresses the need for greater access to low cost healthcare.

### **Expanded Education Support**

Washington's K-12 education system requires expanded support and protection for its students with disabilities. Students with disabilities need greater access to supportive and adaptive learning environments that are prepared to meet their needs, particularly those that are not accounted for within the generalized K-12 curriculum. This support will increase the opportunities for students with disabilities to succeed within and beyond K-12.

Western's Disability Community advocates for:

- Passing SB 5089 which supports additional access to early learning for students with disabilities. This will allow students with disabilities greater opportunities to meet grade level expectations, increasing their odds of attaining higher education.
- Supporting HB 1039 to increase access to non-addictive, opioid overdose medication to K-12 schools and higher education. This will aid in combating the lethality of the opioid epidemic.
- Consider incentives for promoting the Universal Design of Learning in schools so that students with disabilities and their abled peers can learn in the same classroom environment.

### **Employment Equity for People with Disabilities**

In Washington State it is legal to pay both adults and minors with disabilities below both state and federal minimum wage requirements. Although the reasoning centers around allowing employers to extend employment opportunities to people with disabilities, many businesses exploit the labor of people with disabilities, paying them far below a livable wage. This forces disabled people to be dependent on those around them for financial support in such a way that it prevents independence and also restricts the ability to leave abusive environments.

Western's disability community advocates for the following:

- Repeal WAC 296-128-050 which allows employers to pay people with disabilities less than minimum wage
- Repeal WAC 296-125-043 which outlines how individuals with disabilities are exempt from minimum wage laws, and that the “handicapped rate” can be set at an arbitrary rate that reflects the individuals “earning capacity.”
- Create additional supports and enforcement for people with disabilities seeking employment
- Create additional support and funding for workplace accommodations