**Creating Successful and Stable Futures for Foster Youth with Disabilities**

Today's competitive job market increasingly requires postsecondary degrees or certifications. A recent report by The Business-Higher Education Forum (BHEF) estimates that 85% of current jobs and nearly 90% of the fastest and best paying jobs now require postsecondary education credentials. Attaining these credentials involves significant socioeconomic resources. Washington State students who are experiencing unstable living conditions, specifically those who are under the age of 21 in the foster care system and/ or are experiencing homelessness, face increased obstacles and lack of resources. A high number of college-age youth in prisons, foster care, or are homeless also have mental, developmental, emotional, learning, and physical disabilities.

* The ASWWU strongly supports **House Bill 1061** that will combine the efforts of the Department of Social and Health Services, Behavioral Health Administration, the Developmental Disabilities Administration and other related services in developing a transition plan to meet the needs of youth with disabilities transition into adulthood. This transition plan will help reduce the number of foster youth with disabilities being inappropriately discharged into hospitals, or further unstable living conditions, without any possibility of accessing resources for postsecondary credentials.
* Ask to prioritize foster youth with disabilities with health waivers, because if there is no prioritization they will join 14,000 DDA qualified people waiting in WA state who need access to care and health services. Decrease possibly inequity among this vulnerable group. This 14,000 DDA is also a result of understaffing in DDA, so there needs to be funding.
* Decrease the initial age for these transitional programs...Would those who are 17-17.5 need to reapply for extended foster care? Would that disrupt paperwork?
* Ask to include language for SOLAs ( State Operated Living Alternatives (SOLA) and Residential Habilitation Centers (RHC) specifically for foster youth that intend to help them remain in their communities if preferred? Can be built in areas with higher needs of foster youth

**Addressing Inequities in Washington State Medical Training Programs**

This past year health inequities have come into a sharper focus as a result of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. Disparities across the spectrum of healthcare and historically underrepresented communities can create a climate of mistrust that can deter people from accessing medical care in fear of discrimination and stigma.

* ASWWU supports Senate Bill 5228, to create a curriculum on health equity to teach attitudes, knowledge, and skills that enable students to care for patients of diverse communities,if there is an amendment to expand this legislation to also include postsecondary health and wellness programs such as nursing (RN-BSN), public health, and behavioral and mental health.

**Creating Prison to Postsecondary Education Pathways**

The United States has the largest incarceration rate in the world. According to the NAACP, while the U.S. makes up 5% of the global population, it has nearly 25% of the world’s prison population. This reality disproportionately affects Black, Indeginous, and people of color who are overrepresented in the U.S. prison population. Former incarcerated or convicted students who are seeking postsecondary education face financial barriers with many federal student loans not being available to them. Research proves that postsecondary education programs reduce recidivism while also increasing employment prospects following release. Additionally, research has also proven that there is a return on investment with education programs in prisons.

* ASWWU supports **Senate Bill 1044** that expands resources towards postsecondary education and training to incarcerated individuals.
* ASWWU also emphasizes emphasizes the importance of section

**RCW 72.09.270** that requires the department of corrections shall develop an individual reentry plan that also assesses the needs of the incarcerated individual that take into account “demographic biases, such as culture, age, and gender, as well as the needs of the offender, including any learning disabilities, substance abuse or mental health issues, and social or behavior challenges. It also supports amending **2019 C 397S** that addresses the need for secure internet connections to further postsecondary education, especially at a time when learning formats have become remote due to COVID-19 precautions.

Look into federal Second Chance Pell program

Vocational degrees and academic degrees...Five work-force associate degrees...Not enough programs?

College programs online….” with the success of pilot programs \*, please consider…”

**Supporting Our Undocumented and Mixed Status Community at WWU and Washington State**

ASWWU greatly appreciates the approval of [**SB 6561**](http://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2019-20/Pdf/Bills/Session%20Laws/Senate/6561-S2.SL.pdf?q=20200521001216) in the 2019-2020 legislative session that allows undocumented students to apply for state loans. However, it should be recognized that throughout a student’s time in higher education, there will always be unexpected fees and costs. Lack of support and availability of resources healthcare, can lead to physical and mental health challenges, poor academic performance, and low retention rates.

* ASWWU advocates for **House Bill 1191 t**hat will expand healthcare options to include undocumented indiviauls and international students
* Creating a Budget Proviso to provide a one time $1200 stipend to students who filled out the WAFSA
* Close the Northwest Detention Center in Tacoma, the one remaining private prison in Washington State, and revoke its business license due to severe human right violations.

<http://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2021-22/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/1090.pdf?q=20210113164947> House Bill 1090 Relating to private, for-profit detention facilities...Relate to Banning For Profit Prisons / Northwest Immigration Detention Center

**Diversity,Equity, and Inclusion**

**Will have more written here**

**SB 5227**

**Mention students who are on DEI committees must be recognized for their work weather that is in financial compensation or academic credit..WWU BSO remuneration/ payment Section 1.1**