

## **Increase access to Healthcare**

### SB 5204 - Creating the whole Washington health trust.

Guaranteeing all Washington state residents access to affordable healthcare is a necessary movement towards equity in our state. Access to healthcare without feasible ways to pay for it and medical expenses, often leaves people, not just in our state but in the United States, bankrupt. The people most vulnerable to this outcome are those who already experience marginalization and inequities. To serve all segments of Washington's population and reduce barriers for those who experience them most often, we highly support the passage of this bill.

### SB 5313 - Concerning health insurance discrimination.

Western supports the needs of all marginalized communities including both the disabled community and the queer community. Ensuring that queer people have access to healthcare and health services that they need without the threat of discrimination or the potential of being refused services, necessary to protect queer people. We strongly support the passage of this bill and the reduction of the intersectional barriers that it aims to rectify.

### SB 5209 and companion HB 1182 - Enhancing and expanding behavioral health and suicide prevention crisis response services.

Marginalized communities particularly, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and disabled communities are disproportionately likely to experience adverse mental health outcomes. Additionally, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has placed further pressure on many people within this communities. Increasing mental health services helps to protect this populations, particularly people who may fall into one or more of these groups and thus face additional barriers. We strongly support the passage of this bill, as well as any further action to create more mental health services particularly for marginalized groups.

## **Increase Accessibility in Public Spaces**

### SB 5027 - Concerning closed captioning on televisions in places of public accommodation.

Close captioning is one of the most basic accessibility measures that can be taken to help produce equitable outcomes for disabled folks, and it cost nothing to implement them. The introduction of closed captioning in public spaces helps to include not only those who are Deaf or hard of hearing, but also those who are neurodivergent and may have auditory processing disorders. We strongly support the passage of this bill, to promote the inclusion of disabled people in all public spaces.

Increase enforcement of policy 188 – Policy 188 is about establishing expectations for virtual accessibility on any state sanctioned resources. Currently, this policy has very little enforcement and as a result rules are not always fully observed. We urge state legislators to add more comprehensive implementation of this policy, as well as clear penalties for violations. This would make a significant impact for students attending state funded universities - if universities implemented better online accessibility, disabled students would have more equitable access to online materials.