

Increase access to Healthcare

Guaranteeing all Washington state residents access to affordable healthcare is a necessary movement towards equity in our state. Marginalized communities particularly, BIPOC, LGBTQ+, and disabled communities are disproportionately likely to experience adverse health outcomes. Additionally, the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has placed further pressure on many people within this communities. As a result, we support making sure that Washingtonians have access to affordable healthcare, in order to prevent negative economic consequences particularly for people with marginalized identities; 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; increasing mental health services to reduce rates of suicide and mental health crises, particularly among people who are already vulnerable due to the COVID-19 pandemic

Therefore, ASWWU asks the legislatures to

- Support **Senate Bill 5204** that would create the Whole Washington Health Trust that would allow all Washington state residents the opportunity to enroll in nonprofit health insurance coverage, which would include medical, vision, and dental insurance, along with prescription drug benefits.
- Support **Senate Bill 5313** concerning health insurance discrimination which would prevent health insurance discrimination against LGBTQ+, with specific protection being put in place to prevent health insurance companies from rejecting coverage under the pretense that gender affirming surgeries or procedures were merely cosmetic or medically unnecessary.
- Support **Senate Bill 5209** and companion **House Bill 1182** which will enhance and expanding behavioral health and suicide prevention crisis response services, including telephone services during, which have become more used during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Increase Accessibility in Public Spaces

Accessibility in public spaces, both virtual and in-person, is one of the most basic measures to produce equitable outcomes for members of our community who are disabled, and oftentimes it requires very little work or fiscal contribution. By providing public accommodations, we can reduce the undue burden of accessibility barriers which inherently create inequitable outcomes and put disabled peoples at a disadvantage.

Therefore, ASWWU asks the legislature to

- Support **Senate Bill 5027** that will require closed captioning on televisions in places of public accommodation. 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.
- **Increase enforcement of Policy 188 from the State Office of the Chief Information Officer Accessibility-** Policy 188 is established for virtual accessibility for any state sanction resources. Currently, this has very little enforcement, and given that much of our lifestyles are virtual and remote, there needs to be comprehensive implementation of this policy, as well as penalties.