

# **WESTERN INTERSECTIONAL LOBBY DAY AGENDA**

## **Centering Equity at WWU**

The ASWWU intends to center equity in each area of our ASWWU 2023 Legislative Agenda. This Agenda strives to advocate on behalf of student-identified issues and will promote community-driven initiatives by calling on legislators to take action. The ASWWU recognizes the right of all students to feel safe and supported throughout their higher education journey, and our campus must increase its efforts to create a college environment that is accessible, safe, and inclusive for all students. We must also acknowledge that students have led these efforts and discussions in the advancement of students' rights and needs. These efforts should not fall solely on the students, but rather on the University, State, and broader community to ensure equitable funding and resources. The ASWWU asks the legislature to address the many barriers to access, completion, and security that students face, especially BIPOC students, LGBTQ+ students, students with disabilities, undocumented students, and other historically marginalized students in higher education. The ASWWU supports the Washington Roundtable's goal of Washington high school graduates earning a post-secondary credential by 2030. In order to meet this goal, the legislature, the university, and the community at large must address barriers that hinder access and completion rates.

## **Equity & Justice**

The ASWWU recognizes the inequalities people face that need to be addressed. From voter suppression to discrimination, certain groups of people are disproportionately discriminated against. The ASWWU believes it is important to recognize this and supports legislation that takes action against discrimination in all its forms.

**The ASWWU strongly advocates for the passage of [SB 5047](#) and [HB 1014](#) which will ensure that voters of race, color, and language minority groups have equitable access to vote.**

- Tackling restrictions on the voting process is imperative especially for minority groups who face lots of barriers when it comes to being able to vote.
- Making sure race, color, and language is not a factor that deters people from voting is important in having equitable access to fully participate in the electoral process in registering to vote and voting free from improper dilution or abridgement of voting power.

**The ASWWU strongly advocates for the passage of [HB 1045](#) which will set up the Evergreen Basic Income Pilot Program.**

- This program sets up a 24 monthly payment period, based on "Fair Market Rent", which is a two bedroom dwelling unit as published by the United States department of housing and urban development. In Bellingham, that value equates to \$1254 dollars.
- This program would help students who are living in poverty and/or identify as immigrant, refugee, asylee, disabled, or living with behavioral health disorders.

**The ASWWU strongly advocates for the passage of [SB 5137](#) and [HB 1177](#) which would create a missing and murdered indigenous women and people cold case investigations unit.**

- Native American women are murdered at a 10 times greater rate than the national average. Many of these crimes are unsolved or unreported because there is a very high rate of disappearance for Native American women. The national center for disease control reports that homicide is the sixth-leading cause of death for indigenous women and girls and the third-leading cause of death for indigenous men
- It is important for the Native American community, whether they are Western students or not, to be supported and given the services necessary to assure the high levels of homicide and missing-person reports are being addressed.

**The ASWWU strongly advocates for the passage of [SB 5427](#) and [HB 1410](#) which establishes a hate crime and bias incident hotline and creates a compensation program and assistance fund.**

- The hotline would provide appropriate crisis intervention, information, and referral to people who have been targeted or affected by hate crimes and bias incidents that are victim-centered, culturally competent, and trauma-informed.
- The hate crime and bias incident compensation program is created within the attorney general's office for the purpose of providing compensation to persons targeted or affected by hate crimes and bias incidents for damages or losses caused by such crimes and incidents.

**The ASWWU strongly advocates for the passage of [HB1399](#) which would create the Native American scholarship.**

- This scholarship is offered to fulfill the additional cost of attendance needs that are not covered through other state financial aid programs.
- Only 19% on Native Americans between the age of 18-24 are enrolled in school compared to 41% of the overall U.S. population.
- Offering a scholarship to members of federally recognized Indian tribes creates an additional incentive for members to complete financial aid applications, thereby increasing opportunities for other financial aid programs and providing students with additional funds to attend postsecondary education.

## **Disability Accommodations/ ADA compliance**

The ASWWU recognizes the multiple forms of disabilities students may be impacted by during their educational journey. From mental health, physical, and sensory disabilities, the student body recognizes these impede student success. The ASWWU recognizes some students on campus may be intersectionally impacted by multiple disabilities and that should not be a barrier to their success as a student. The ASWWU advocates for campuses, including Western, to be held to ADA compliance. Students at Western care about receiving adequate accommodations including building accessibility.

**The ASWWU strongly advocates for the passage of [HB 1022](#) which provides additional funds to support and services for veterans' assistance and for persons with developmental disabilities or mental health needs.**

- This bill creates additional provisions and requirements for Counties to increase levies in order to fund services for veterans and people with developmental disabilities or mental health needs.
- Increasing funding available for these crucial resources allows more individuals to access the services they need, and improves the quality of care.

**The ASWWU strongly advocates for the full investment of the \$53.75 million capital budget request for the design & construction of the Student Development & Success Center on Western Washington University's campus.**

- Critical student services such as counseling and advising centers are currently located in secluded, hard-to-reach locations on campus. Behavioral health services are located a mile away from the north part of campus, where a large number of students are located in five residence halls. Mental health and counseling services are located on the top floor of the oldest administrative building on campus. These services are very difficult for students to access.
- The Student Development & Success Center will be located near the middle of the university making these services equally accessible for students living on both sides of campus. The new building will co-locate counseling and wellness services with student success services such as academic advising and financial aid, providing a private place for students to utilize these support systems.

## **Resources for Sexual Assault Survivors**

The ASWWU recognizes that sexual assault occurs on campus and affects students of all genders. The ASWWU recognizes that facing a traumatic event such as sexual assault does not only impact students' educational journey but also often has [life-long consequences](#) such as PTSD, vulvodynia, vaginosis, major depression, and substance abuse. The ASWWU strongly supports any and all legislation that assists victims of sexual assault. Resources on and off campus should be widely spread, easy to find, and should be financed to meet the needs of sexual assault survivors.

**The ASWWU advocates for the passage of [HB 1089](#) and [SB 5114](#) which supports adults with lived experiences of sex trafficking.**

- These bills are set to Direct the Office of Crime Victims Advocacy to administer funding for healing, support, and transition services for adults with the lived experience of sex trafficking.

**The ASWWU advocates for the passage of [HB 1028](#) which supports crime victims and witnesses by promoting victim-centered, trauma-informed responses in the legal system.**

- [Women ages 18-24 are at an elevated risk for of sexual violence.](#) Approximately [one in five](#) female students reports nonconsensual, unwanted sexual contact during their college years. According to RAINN sexual violence is more prevalent at college campuses than any other crime. Survivors of sexual assault are often unlikely to report sexual assault due to the stigma, trauma, and shame they may face. Therefore the numbers we currently have may be much bigger.

## **Gender Discrimination/ Sexism**

The ASWWU recognizes that gender discrimination and sexism is an ongoing issue. It is important to recognize those who may be discriminated against and take the actions necessary to support them.

**The ASWWU supports a bill introduced last session (2021-22) [SB5877](#) addressing anti-discrimination policies in institutions of higher education.**

- This bill would require institutions of higher education participating in the Washington college grant program to either sign an affidavit that the institution will comply with anti discrimination policies and practices required under the bill or opt-out of compliance. Supporting this bill will require higher education to uphold higher standards for their anti-discrimination policy.
- The bill did not pass during the last legislative session, and we would like to bring them back.

**The ASWWU strongly advocates for the passage of [SB 5171](#) and [HB 1152](#) which addresses the price discrepancy and discrimination between gendered products.**

- Businesses tend to charge different prices for products that are substantially similar but work for different genders in which the product is marketed and intended for. On average, items that are advertised for women are 13% more expensive compared to similar items targeted for men. Over their lifetime, women are paying thousands of dollars more to purchase similar products to men.
- These bills work to address the unfair pricing of feminine products by calling for equal or similar pricing between masculine and feminine products.

## **Support for Mixed Status/ Undocumented Students**

The ASWWU recognizes the rights of undocumented and mixed-status students and their families, regardless of immigration status. Many undocumented and mixed-status students came to the U.S. as children, and there is currently no easy pathway to citizenship for many of these individuals. The AS recognizes these students' contributions to the classroom and their communities. Their immigration status shouldn't bar them from receiving benefits.

**The ASWWU supports a bill introduced last session (2021-22) [HB 1191](#) which would ensure equity in health coverage.**

- This bill would increase healthcare equity by creating state-run lookalikes for federal programs like Medicaid, for those who are undocumented or mixed status but otherwise meet the requirements for enrollment in Medicaid.
- [Washington state is home to over 1 million immigrants](#) who attend school, pay taxes, work, and contribute to our state's vibrant economy.
- When immigration status is a barrier to receiving care, undocumented and mixed status individuals are often forced to defer care or forgo preventative visits to providers, resulting in expensive E.R. visits and complications from preventable conditions.
- Many students already struggle financially, and the additional burden faced by undocumented and mixed status students in paying for healthcare can make attending University prohibitively expensive. Expanding federal programs to these students will improve health outcomes and make university education more attainable.

**The ASWWU strongly advocates for the passage of [SB 5109](#) and [HB 1095](#) which creates a wage replacement program for certain Washington workers excluded from unemployment insurance**

- Ineligibility for unemployment benefits has devastated immigrant communities during the pandemic economic crisis, particularly immigrants working in low-wage industries. Several of the industries that have experienced the highest rates of job loss in Washington due to the pandemic are low-wage sectors with the highest numbers of immigrant workers including the restaurant, hotel, retail, and construction industries.
- To support the survival of Washington's immigrant workers and families during periods of crisis, particularly low-income households, the legislature intends to establish a weekly wage replacement state program similar to the state and federal unemployment insurance program for workers who are unemployed and not eligible for the state and federal unemployment insurance.
- For undocumented students or undocumented parents who have lost their job, it is important that they have the support needed to help them pay for their basic needs.

**The ASWWU advocates for the passage of [SB 5225](#) which makes immigration status of college students to be irrelevant for determining working connections child care eligibility**

- The state has granted higher education tuition assistance to students regardless of their immigration status. This assistance is one step toward helping these students on their educational pathway and will in turn help address workforce shortages.
- The legislature must also recognize that child care for these students, who are also parents, is a barrier to enrollment in these higher education programs.
- The current working connections child care program requires children to have a certain immigration status to be eligible. The legislature should expand the working connections child care program to provide access to child care for these families

**The ASWWU advocates for the passage of [SB 5631](#) which requires state agencies to clearly identify programs and services which accept applicants with deferred action for childhood arrival status**

- Washington ranks among the top ten states of residence for individuals with DACA status. As of September 2022, there are 14,600 DACA recipients residing in Washington.
- In Washington, programs and services DACA status individuals currently may apply for include the following: standard state driver's licenses, in-state tuition, student financial aid, government funded health care assistance.
- This act will help students who are DACA recipients to be informed more clearly by state agencies if they are able to use state services and programs

## **Protecting Trans Students**

The ASWWU recognizes that trans rights have been one of the most targeted and at-risk in recent years. The number of bills attacking trans and gender-diverse communities has sharply increased. Just in 2022, there were 132 anti-trans bills introduced in legislatures across 34 states. These included LGBTQ+-friendly sexual education being banned from certain states. Many students on campus are trans and their right to safety and inclusion should be guaranteed. We believe Washington is on the right path to securing trans-student safety, however, we must do more. The ASWWU supports trans safety legislation and believes the state of Washington should continue these efforts.

**The ASWWU supports the protection of Washingtonians' health data which includes sensitive information such as a student who has or is transitioning.**

- This would include increased data privacy protections in the wake of the Dobbs Supreme Court decision and empower Washingtonians with more control over their health data. If something such as transitioning one day becomes punishable, it is important to protect trans individuals from facing unfair consequences.

**The ASWWU does not support [HB 1214](#) which prevents children under age of 18 from transitioning.**

- Many children are gender nonconforming and feel as though their gender at birth does not match the way they feel about themselves. [Gender nonconformity can appear as young as two or three years old](#) when children start to explore different modes and expressions of gender as they start to develop and recognize who they are.
- Not allowing children to transition in the way that makes them feel comfortable in their own body or in society can result in gender dysphoria, a DSM-5 designated clinical distress that one may feel when sex or gender assigned at birth does not match their identity. Children who do not have their gender identity affirmed can feel bullied, victimized, depressed, and suicidal.
- Gender affirming care has been proven to improve mental health outcomes and well-being of gender diverse adolescents and children. It is patient centered and encompasses many aspects of healthcare needs and support, including mental healthcare, reproductive counseling, and support in social transition (i.e. non medical treatment).