



## Protect and Maintain Access to Health Care and Safety Net Services

### Background

---

Washington hospitals provide around-the-clock, life-saving health services to all residents in the state. They also provide safety net supports to many low-income and un- or under-insured Washingtonians. As the legislature grapples with the devastating economic and financial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, health care and social safety net services are potentially in jeopardy of being either drastically underfunded or eliminated.

Sweeping cuts to the state budget will disproportionately and inequitably impact health care and social safety net programs, making it regressive and shortsighted. The state learned this lesson over 10 years ago when it made deep and devastating cuts to health care and the social safety net in the aftermath of the 2007-2009 Great Recession. For many of these vital programs, it took several years for the services to be restored, and it was to the detriment of the state's most vulnerable populations. Reducing funding for these programs will not eliminate the need for these services, as many Washingtonians, including the most vulnerable, will turn to community hospitals and health care providers for help.

### WSHA's Position

---

WSHA recognizes that the legislature is facing a significant budget challenge. To address this, WSHA supports a balanced fiscal approach – one that involves responsible and equitable cuts that do not focus the brunt of the cuts on the health care and social safety net programs. WSHA will evaluate the need for new revenue in light of the broader picture.

Cuts cannot impact Medicaid long-term supports and services for patients ready for hospital discharge nor on the continuum for behavioral health services. WSHA opposes closure of Western and Eastern State Hospitals' civil wards without increasing available community beds. Equally devastating would be cuts to Medicaid eligibility, benefits or rates as well as those that threaten critical access hospitals, or underfunding programs that address health equity.

### Key Messages

---

- WSHA recognizes that the Legislature is facing a significant budget challenge. However, drastic cuts to the state budget will disproportionately and inequitably impact health care and social safety net programs. Reducing funding will not eliminate the need for those services.
- WSHA urges the Legislature to find a balanced solution to the state's fiscal crisis. If the solution involves cuts, it should be responsible and equitable, and not focus on health care and social safety net programs. A solution involving revenue should have an equitable impact on Washington residents.
- WSHA will be the prime voice against any cuts to hospitals (including critical access hospitals) and Medicaid payment; a key partner against cuts to WSHA priority areas such as behavioral health and post-acute patients who are stuck in hospitals; and a supporting voice against cuts to other health care services.

### Contact Information

---

Shirley Prasad, JD, LLM, MHA  
Senior Policy Director, Government Affairs  
[ShirleyP@wsaha.org](mailto:ShirleyP@wsaha.org) | 206.216.2550

Len McComb  
WSHA Lobbyist  
[Twomedicine@live.com](mailto:Twomedicine@live.com) | 360.951.1661