

WASHINGTON'S 2016 LEGISLATIVE SESSION

Washington's 2016 Legislative Session began on January 11th and ended on March 10th, followed by a Special Session that concluded on March 29th. NoHLA staff advocated for a number of bills, including two that Governor Inslee signed on March 31, 2016.

Medicaid Suspension: Substitute Senate Bill 6430 requires the state to suspend, rather than terminate, Medicaid when a person is incarcerated, allowing for immediate reactivation of coverage upon release. The current policy of terminating coverage forces vulnerable individuals to reapply for Medicaid when they are released, which results in unnecessary barriers and delays. We are thrilled to report that this bill passed both the Senate and the House unanimously.

Transfer of IRO Authority: House Bill 2326 transfers oversight of the Independent Review Organizations (IRO) from the Department of Health to the Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC). IROs decide consumers' appeals when a health insurer denies coverage. Consumers will benefit from the transfer because the OIC is the agency that regulates health insurers. The transfer will enhance the OIC's new [searchable database](#) of IRO decisions that NoHLA successfully sought last year.

In late March, the Senate and House agreed upon a 2016 supplemental budget. During negotiations there were disputes between the House and Senate regarding savings and the need for new revenue. The supplemental budget requires the Health Care Authority to keep Medicaid managed care costs flat through calendar 2017 and restricts the Health Care Authority from spending state dollars on the activities of the transformation waiver/Healthier Washington initiative. However, the budget does provide additional resources to treat and support people with mental illness and homeless youth.

TAILORED SUPPORTS FOR OLDER ADULTS: STATE PROPOSES NEW PROGRAM TO SUPPORT CAREGIVERS



As part of its Medicaid Transformation waiver request to the federal government, Washington State is developing a new option for individuals needing long-term care services and supports: an

initiative called Tailored Supports for Older Adults (TSOA). TSOA is intended to serve those who are not yet eligible for – or enrolled in – Medicaid but do have care needs. The goal is to provide additional supports to their informal caregivers, such as family members, in order to delay their Medicaid enrollment and entry into traditional long-term care services such as COPES or Community First Choice. TSOA eligibility will be determined based on the care receiver's income and assets, however, the services are intended to support the caregiver with such things as training and education, counseling, and respite care. Individuals can apply for services through their local Area Agency on Aging (AAA) or Home & Community Services (HCS) office as they would with any other long-term care services. The program, services, eligibility criteria, and application process are all in different stages of development with many unanswered questions still looming.

NoHLA is reviewing the application and eligibility criteria and providing input to HCA and DSHS as they develop the program and services to be offered.

give
BIG
May 3

Can we count on your support for the giveBIG challenge?

For this annual day of giving, we've set a goal to raise \$9,000! Please help us achieve our goal and ensure that people around the state get the health care they need. Share the news - invite your friends and colleagues to learn about NoHLA and the important work we do. Thank you!

NOHLA ADVOCATES TO END SURPRISE BILLING

NoHLA supported recent legislative efforts to ban “surprise billing” (also called “balance billing”) of consumers in emergency medical situations. This common practice occurs when individuals with health insurance are unexpectedly charged for emergency care provided at their in-network hospital by an out-of-network doctor - one whose services are not covered by their insurance. This year, Insurance Commissioner Kreidler sought legislation to ban the practice. NoHLA supported this legislation, providing input and testimony. We received invaluable support from Consumers Union and Consumer Reports National Research Center, which did a targeted [survey of Washington consumers](#) indicating a high rate of surprise billing and widespread concern about the practice. Unfortunately, the bill did not pass, and a House proposal to fund a stakeholder work group to study ways to eliminate balance billing did not survive. However, we’re not giving up! NoHLA will continue to push for consumer protections. For more on surprise billing, see these excellent [Consumers Union resources](#).



Thanks to NoHLA volunteer Brigid Anderson, for her assistance on this project.

NOHLA IS PLEASED TO WELCOME TWO NEW STAFF ATTORNEYS!



Huma Zarif graduated from University of California, Hastings College of the Law with a concentration in Health Law. Prior to law school, Huma worked as a social worker for over eight years, including at Harborview and Swedish Medical Centers. She obtained both her Bachelor in Social Welfare and Master of Social Work from the University of Washington, School of Social Work. Huma believes health care is a human right and is passionate about improved access to health care services.

As her schedule permits, Huma enjoys volunteering and previously served on the Board of Directors of Chaya (now API-Chaya), a Seattle based nonprofit working to end domestic violence in the South Asian, Middle Eastern, and Muslim communities. She also volunteered with HealthRight International where she conducted mental health assessments for asylum applicants. Following college graduation, Huma’s interest in both local and global health issues led her to volunteer at an orphanage and maternity hospital in Kabul, Afghanistan.



Ann Vining came to NoHLA in March after a career as a legal services staff attorney that began at Spokane Legal Services in 1979. She continued at Evergreen Legal Services and Columbia Legal Services before moving to Northwest Justice Project’s Everett office in 2004. Since 1982, her work has focused on benefits issues, including Medicaid, Medicare, and long-term care services, and other issues of concern to older adults and people with disabilities. Ann served as a clerk for a federal district court judge in Spokane after graduating from the University of Wisconsin Law School in 1977. Her undergraduate degree is from Harvard University.

Other significant experiences included growing up in the Ozarks, attending Little Rock Central High School after federal authorities secured desegregation there, working with children with profound intellectual challenges, staffing a Wisconsin Governor’s Task Force that developed a comprehensive agenda for accessibility for people with disabilities (years before the ADA), and serving as a caregiver for family members with physical, mental health, or cognitive challenges.

WITH APPRECIATION

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Community Catalyst ♦ *Judd v. AT&T* Settlement Fund ♦ Ms. Foundation for Women ♦ Northwest Justice Project Raising Women’s Voices ♦ Robert Wood Johnson Foundation ♦ The Seattle Foundation—Give Together WA CAN! ♦ Employer matching funds ...and Many Generous Individuals!