

February 28, 2026

**Honorable June Robinson, Chair**  
**Honorable Timm Ormsby, Chair**

**Re: 163 orgs urge you to preserve Medicaid PT/OT/ST care in the final operating budget**

Dear Chair Robinson, Chair Ormsby, and Members of the Ways & Means and Appropriations Committees:

The undersigned 163 organizations and care providers write to thank you for your efforts to protect the health care safety net in your proposed budgets, but also to urge you to ensure there are no cuts to adult physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy (PT/OT/ST) in Apple Health/Medicaid coverage in your final budget.

**PT/OT/ST are evidence-based, cost-effective, medically necessary services that help people recover from injuries, successfully discharge from hospitals and nursing facilities, live safely at home, and prevent functional decline.**

**These vital therapies help people maintain mobility, care for themselves, communicate, eat, and recover function needed to participate in work and society.** Consider Jen, a 29-year old Medicaid enrollee from Snohomish County:

*Jen has a developmental disability caused by a brain injury resulting from an early-life cardiac condition. Among other challenges, she has mobility and balance problems. Currently she is working with a physical therapist to reduce her fall risk with targeted exercises. Due to injured ligaments in her hand resulting from a previous fall, Jen also needed the services of an occupational therapist to provide splinting to prevent permanent loss of her hand function.*

These therapies help prevent Jen's medical issues from turning into painful complications that would require invasive and expensive interventions. **Eliminating therapy services would not eliminate the need, but rather would push care to higher cost settings**, including emergency rooms, hospitals, and long-term care. The monetary cost of these alternatives is far higher, and the human costs – impact to independence and health outcomes – are greater still.

**Low-income Medicaid enrollees cannot self-pay for needed therapies, so many would be forced to forego care.** A 2025 survey revealed that 79% of surveyed Washington households that included a person with a physical or cognitive impairment delayed or went without care in the previous year due to cost. These affordability challenges are even more acute for Medicaid-eligible people living near the poverty line.

**Other consequences of eliminating PT/OT/ST include:**

- **Increased Hospital Admissions & Readmissions:** Without OT and PT to ensure patients regain strength following hospitalizations, patients risk hospital readmissions and failed surgeries. Hospitals will be less likely to discharge to home-based care. For people living with disabilities at home, OT and PT help prevent hospital admissions and ER visits by ensuring people keep the strength and skills to live safely at home.

- **Functional Decline:** OT and PT ensure patients recover the ability to do their jobs and take care of their homes and loved ones after an injury or illness. Without these therapies, adults will not regain function needed to return to jobs, school, caregiving, and independent living.
- **Safety Risks:** Speech therapy is critical for patients recovering from strokes, neurological issues, or conditions like oral cancer. Without ST to manage issues like dysphagia (swallowing disorders), these patients face a high risk of aspiration pneumonia, malnutrition, and ongoing impeded speech.
- **Loss of “Aging in Place” and Community-Based Living:** Removing medically necessary services like PT/OT/ST can mean the difference between families caring for loved ones at home versus more expensive residential care. These therapies assist older adults and people with disabilities with activities of daily living (ADLs). Eliminating therapies risks placing an unsustainable burden on family and professional caregivers. Without therapy services, patients who could have recovered may become dependent on state-funded long-term supports or prematurely transition into expensive residential care facilities.

**Additionally, we question whether the total elimination of PT/OT/ST is consistent with Medicaid law.** Home health and outpatient/inpatient hospital services are mandatory for “categorically needy” Medicaid enrollees, and the scope of such care often includes PT/OT/ST. As a result, these services may in fact be mandatory in certain settings.

**Cutting therapies will cost the state too much.** While cuts might show some immediate budget savings, the resulting increase in hospitalizations and institutional care will create a longer-term loss for Washington’s taxpayers. It would be a bad deal to abandon three times more federal match funding than any savings to the state.

For these reasons, we urge you to maintain Medicaid coverage for adult physical therapy, occupational therapy, and speech therapy in the final supplemental operating budget.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Northwest Health Law Advocates  
 Washington Chapter of the American Physical Therapy Association  
 Washington Occupational Therapy Association (WOTA)  
 Washington Speech-Language-Hearing Association (WSLHA)

**74 Supporting Organizations**

- AARP
- Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern Washington
- Alzheimer’s Association
- American Occupational Therapy Association
- American Physical Therapy Association
- American Speech-Language-Hearing Association
- Asian Counseling and Referral Service
- Association of County Human Services
- Association for Advanced Practice Psychiatric Nurses

Benton Franklin Parent Coalition  
Better Health Together  
Community Employment Alliance  
Community Residential Services Association  
Developmental Disabilities Ombuds  
Disability Rights Washington  
Eastern Washington University  
Eastern Washington University Speech-Language Pathology  
Economic Opportunity Institute  
Elderhood Senior Alliance  
Foundation for Healthy Generations  
Health Care For All - Washington  
Healthcare is a Human Right WA  
HealthierHere  
Home Care Association of America - WA Chapter  
Home Care Association of Washington (HCAW)  
Kittitas County Parent Coalition  
LeadingAge Washington  
Lewis Mason Thurston County Area Agency on Aging Advisory Council  
Life Works  
Mayors Council on African American Elders (MCAAE)  
North Seattle Progressives  
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project  
Northwest Regional Council (NWRC)  
Northwest Regional Council – Senior Services Advisory Board  
Olympic Area Agency on Aging  
Pacific Islander Health Board of Washington State  
Pacific Northwest University of Health Sciences  
Parent Coalition Grant & Adams Counties  
Patient Coalition of Washington  
PAVE  
People First of Washington  
PNWU Physical Therapy Program  
PSARA (Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action)  
SE WA Aging and Long Term Care  
Seattle, King County Area Agency on Aging  
SEIU 775  
Self Advocates in Leadership  
Skagit County Parent to Parent  
Snohomish County Aging and Disability Services/AAA  
Special Olympics Washington  
Spokane Disability Collaborative  
Spokane Neighborhood Action Partners (SNAP)  
Statewide Poverty Action Network  
The Arc of Cowlitz County  
The Arc of King County  
The Arc of Snohomish County  
The Arc of Spokane  
The Arc of Washington State  
The Arc of Whatcom County  
The Seattle-King County Advisory Council for Aging and Disability Services

Thurston Mason DD Coalition  
Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A)  
Washington Autism Alliance  
Washington Brain Injury Support Coalition  
Washington CAN  
Washington Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics  
Washington Poor People's Campaign  
Washington State Long-Term Care Ombudsman Program  
Washington State Medical Association (WSMA)  
Washington State Music Therapy Task Force  
Washington State Nurses Association (WSNA)  
Whitworth University  
Wise  
WWU Speech, Language, & Hearing Sciences

### **85 Supporting Care Providers**

A Speech Path, Inc.  
ABC Physical Therapy  
Achieve Coaching and Consulting  
Adaptive Brain Speech Therapy  
Agape Pediatric Therapy  
Agape Therapy Services, PLLC  
Aloe Speech and Language PLLC  
Alpha Supported Living Services  
Ambitions of Washington  
Ashley House NW  
Banchemo Disability Partners  
Bloom Center for Pediatric Therapy  
Blue Jay Speech & Language Therapy Services  
Bookmark Speech, Language, & Literacy Services  
Brain Tree Therapies  
Center for Chronic Illness  
Center for Pediatric Therapy  
Chat NW  
Children FIRST Therapy  
Circle Creek Therapy PLLC  
Clallam Mosaic  
Columbia Pediatric Therapy  
CommuniKate Speech Therapy  
Community Health Center of Snohomish County  
Community Living  
Conduit Advocacy & Therapy  
Convivio Health  
CorePhysio  
DAHLIA Living

Downtown Emergency Service Center  
Elevate Sports and Spine Physical Therapy  
Exceptional Foresters Inc.  
Experience Physical Therapy  
Family Health Centers (of Okanogan)  
Forefront Physical Therapy  
Form Speech and Swallowing PLLC  
Frontier Behavioral Health  
Full Life Care  
HealthPoint  
Inglewood Physical Therapy, PS  
Inglewood Residential & Community Services  
Integrated Living Services  
International Community Health Services  
Joya  
Kinding  
Kintsugi Physical Therapy and Wellness  
Lifepoint Health  
Light of Mine Speech Therapy PLLC  
Lourdes Health  
Madrona Speech  
Max Higbee Center  
Mullis Community Senior Center  
Music Therapy Center Spokane  
Neighborcare Health  
Neuropsychological Services of the South Sound  
Olympic Sports & Spine  
Pacific Speech and Language, Inc.  
Parkview Services  
Pathways Speech  
Peak Sports and Spine Physical Therapy  
Penrose & Associates Physical Therapy  
PrAACTical Communication Speech Therapy Clinic  
PROVAIL  
Puffin Island LLC  
Rain Therapy Collective  
Rainbow Pediatric Occupational Therapy PLLC  
Recovery Cafe  
Renew Physical Therapy  
Sea Mar Community Health Centers  
Sno-King Speech Inc.  
Sound to Summit Speech Solutions  
Sound Waves Speech and Language Therapy LLC  
Stepping Stones Pediatric Therapy, PLLC

Stride Physio  
Summit Rehabilitation Associates  
Summit to Surf Physiotherapy  
Tandy Therapy LLC  
Tidepool Therapy Services PLLC  
Total Living Concept  
Trios Health  
TrueCraft Therapy  
Uplift AT PLLC  
WWVDN/Parent to Parent WW  
Yakima Neighborhood Health Services  
Youthful Horizons Physical Therapy, P.S.