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## **Governor signs stimulus bill, fiscal cutoff looms**

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On Friday, February 19, Governor Jay Inslee signed into law [ESHB 1368](#), putting \$2.2 billion into play across the state for activities related to economic and small business recovery, reopening schools, rental assistance, and COVID-related contact tracing, testing and vaccinations.

According to the Governor's press release, the bill provides:

- \$714 million in assistance for K-12 schools.
- \$618 million for public health's response to COVID, including testing, investigation and contact tracing; and funding for vaccination efforts.
- \$365 million for emergency eviction, rental and utility assistance.
- \$240 million for business assistance grants.
- \$50 million for childcare.
- \$26 million for food banks and other food programs.
- \$91 million for income assistance, including \$65 million for relief for the state's immigrant population.

School districts must submit a school reopening plan to OSPI by March 1 to receive their portion of the federal stimulus funding. The template for reopening plans was sent to all school district superintendents last week. Bills to stabilize funding related to declines in bus ridership ([2SSB 5128](#)) and to stabilize declines in student enrollment ([SHB 1476](#)) have passed out of their respective fiscal committees. [SHB 1208](#) would create flexibility in spending Learning Assistance program (LAP) funds and passed House Appropriations Friday.

### *Fiscal cutoff February 22*

Both the House Appropriations and Senate Ways & Means committees have scheduled public hearings and executive action for Monday, the last day for most bills to be considered by fiscal committees to remain under consideration this session. Exceptions include the budget bills and bills "necessary to implement the budget," typically bills that would raise or save money and, therefore, are necessary to finish up the budget work. For example, the Senate Environment, Energy & Technology Committee has scheduled Proposed Substitute SB 5126, a cornerstone of the Governor's climate action agenda, for a vote February 25. The bill has a "cap and invest" strategy which would raise funding that could be spent on infrastructure projects and in other ways.

Bills with smaller fiscal notes or strong legislative support may find that they die in the fiscal committees but show up in the 2021-23 operating budget proposals. This is one way lawmakers

can keep “alive” concepts they want to pass this session. So, while the bill may die Monday, the issue may live on in a proviso.

### *SBE considers emergency rules for graduation requirements*

The House and Senate have passed and will be sending [EHB 1121](#) shortly to the Governor’s desk for signature, likely sometime this week. The bill would authorize the State Board of Education (SBE) to offer graduation requirement waivers to high school seniors in times of emergencies.

The SBE is holding [a public hearing](#) February 25 on draft emergency rules and plans to adopt the rules at its March meeting. Currently the SBE has an open survey on the waiver requirements, which includes questions about how many credits could be waived, whether graduation pathway options should be waived, and in what circumstances would it be okay to waive both credits and pathways. [Watch the short video](#) explaining the bill and waiver options. Click [here](#) to complete the survey.

## **WSPTA Legislative Priorities**

*(all bills may be accessed [here](#))*

Washington State PTA adopts a [two-year platform](#). Delegates at the 2020 Legislative Assembly adopted five issues as the highest priority issues, and three as “Also Supported.” [Videos](#) and handouts for members’ use in advocacy efforts this session are posted on the WSPTA Advocacy [page](#) under each position statement.

Bills that made the February 15 policy cutoff or have passed out of fiscal committee at the time of this report include (click [here](#) and type in the bill number):

- HB 1085 would require school districts to create individual medical plans and conduct training in best practices for supporting students with seizure disorders.
- 2SHB 1139 would require school districts to take action to address lead in drinking water.
- SHB 1213, would create the early learning Fair Start for Kids Act. It has a related bill, HB 1451, which would move the ECEAP entitlement date to the 2026-27 school year. The Senate also has a Fair Start for Kids Act (SSB 5237), which passed Senate Ways & Means last week.
- 2SHB 1263 passed House Capital Budget with an amendment to make school districts in rural counties eligible to apply for broadband (and other) infrastructure grants and adds school districts to the list of entities that should be consulted with on broadband expansion projects. The amendment was offered by Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos. The second amendment was requested by WSPTA in testimony.
- SHB 1354, would evaluate factors leading to youth suicide. An amendment requested by WSPTA regarding the analysis was accepted.

- SHB 1365 was changed substantially when passing out of the House Education Committee and passed the fiscal committee with the addition of a null and void clause. It no longer requires school districts to have a 1:1 ratio of devices for all students and staff.
- 2SHB 1477 would create a 988 system in Washington state. The bill was changed in House Finance and has a proposed second substitute in House Appropriations. One change would be to remove the vision to a youth tip line, which was done at WSPTA request.
- SHB 1504 would establish a behavioral health workforce pilot program and provide training support grants to community mental health and substance use disorder treatment providers.
- SSB 5078 would prohibit the manufacture, possession, distribution, importation, selling, offering for sale, purchasing, or transfer of large capacity magazines with the capability of holding more than 10 rounds of ammunition, unless the possession falls within one of the stated exceptions including prior possession.
- SSB 5327 would establish a youth reporting system. As amended in Senate Ways & Means, the establishment of the program would depend on funds appropriated for this specific purpose.
- SSB 5321 would eliminate the requirement that a student sign a pledge to be eligible for the College Bound Scholarship and create a process for auto-enrolling eligible students. The bill also would create a new \$500 stipend for eligible students with family incomes between 65 and 100 percent median family income upon high school graduation.
- Bills we continue to watch for possible impact include [SHB 1332](#), which would require a county treasurer to grant an extension of the due date of any property taxes payable in 2021, and several other bills that would single out specific taxpayers for deferrals or property tax exemptions.

Stalled bills include:

- SB 5386 and SJR 8204 passed the Senate education committee but have failed to be scheduled in Senate Ways & Means. The bills would lower the threshold to 55% for passing school bonds, if adopted by constitutional amendment at the next general election.
- SHB 1153 would set up a language access program in school districts, based on best practices, for interpretation services. Section 8 of the bill would extend the work group another six months to tackle issues not addressed initially – this is an example of something that could show up in the budget.
- HB 1404 would require universal screening of highly capable students at least twice, require professional development, and make changes in teacher preparation programs. The bill passed the House Education Committee without changes but has not been scheduled for a hearing or vote in House Appropriations.

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Here's a look at Advocacy in Action for WSPTA this past week:

- Speaking in favor of [SSB 5327](#), WSPTA member Tanya Aggar told Senate Ways & Means Committee members that stopping the silence could save lives. The Senate bill would create an anonymous youth tip line for reporting concern for self-harm or harm to others. Hear Tanya's testimony [here](#).
- Continuing to speak in favor of bills that would expand broadband infrastructure across the state, Nancy Chamberlain asked House Capital Budget committee members for an amendment to ensure projects tapping public funds consult with school districts as part of their overall expansion plan. Listen [here](#).
- When the House Appropriations Committee heard testimony on HB 1139, taking action to address lead in water, Washington State PTA was there in full support. [Hear](#) Susan Baird-Joshi ask lawmakers to pass the bill and ensure districts have sufficient funding to complete any needed remediation. "Our children matter, and their health matters. Please pass this bill."

## The Week Ahead

*(Schedule subject to change, all bills can be founded through this [link](#))*

Monday is the final day for bills in fiscal committees to move. Starting Tuesday, the focus will shift from committees to floor action through 5:00 p.m. March 9. Floor action is expected to be slower this session due to the virtual nature of discussion and voting.