

February 11, 2025

WAEMA February 2025 Public Policy Report
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Legislative/Political Landscape

Our new Governor, Bob Ferguson, was sworn in with a very mainstream speech that seemed to appeal to many Republicans in the chambers. He has offered more opportunities to work in a bipartisan manner on issues such as emergency orders, timeliness of government permitting and stated that he will cut state agency budgets by 6% to deal with the pending budget deficit.

I attended the Governor's Inaugural Ball on January 15th and there were over 3,000 people in attendance! The Governor's Ball has been a tradition since statehood, marking the start of a new Governor's term in office to honor our shared commitment to Washington's future. (no state funds are used) This picture is of the opening ceremonies with Squaxin Island Tribe. Lots of great food prepared by local trade school students, WA state produced drinks and dancing... a good time for sure, but a bit overwhelming!



We are 25 days into the 105-day Legislative Session which began on January 13th and ends on April 27th. So far around 1,600 bills have been introduced this session. We are tracking around 28 bills so far. Our 'WAEMA Hot Team' meets weekly to discuss the upcoming public hearings and what the associations position will be on bills of concern or that we should support. The first bill cut-off is on February 21st and many of these bills will not make it out of the policy committees and die for the year. Just a reminder that in a two year (biennial) legislative cycle, these bills can come back during the next legislative session.

In the early part of a "long" session of the legislature, especially after a big election where roughly a third of the legislature turned over, there are lots of educational workshops for new members of the committees. In the Senate and House Healthcare Committees that means that the Health Care Authority, Department of Health, Department of Health and Social Services, Office of the Insurance Commissioner and more give presentations on what their agencies do and how they regulate health care in Washington state.

The committees also begin to hear bills that were assigned to that committee and there has been a lot of them! To survive the policy committees, the bill must have a public hearing and get a vote in an Executive Session. During the public hearings is when we get a chance to impact the process by providing public comment on a bill to support or oppose. This can mean testifying before the committee, submitting written comments or just signing in as Pro or Con on a bill. I have attached our current bill tracking list for your review.

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Department of Health (DOH)

HELMS launches on Feb. 19, 2025: The Washington State Department of Health is excited to announce the upcoming launch of a new licensing system for all health professionals and facilities in Washington February 19, 2025! The Health Enforcement and Licensing Management System (HELMS) will help create efficiencies, improve user experience, streamline processing, strengthen data access, and reduce paper-based activities. If your license expires in February, renew now to avoid delays!

All licensing and credentialing systems for health professionals and facilities will be unavailable on **Friday, February 14 from 5 p.m. until the morning of Wednesday, February 19, 2025**, to complete system upgrades. Please complete your applications and renewals now to avoid delays. Ahead of the HELMS launch, all licensing and credentialing systems will be unavailable in order to make system upgrades.

- **If your expiration date (likely your birthday) is after February, you do not need to renew early or take action now.**
- Draft applications started online will be removed on February 14, 2025, at 5 p.m. You will need to restart your application after February 19, 2025.
- No updates or changes will be made to licenses for health professionals and facilities during the freeze. Search tools like [Provider Credential Search](#) and [Facility Search](#) will still be available but will not be updated during the freeze.
- For more information on the licensing freeze and the new licensing system, please visit DOH.wa.gov. You can find information about your specific profession or facility type within the [Licenses, Permits, & Certificates tab](#).

If you have questions or concerns regarding the licensing freeze, please reach out to the HELMS team at HELMS@doh.wa.gov.

Labor and Industries (L & I)

WAEMA requested agency rulemaking at L & I to increase visits for low back pain coverage to a maximum 24 units per claim, same as it is for chronic migraines! We received an email back from the department stating that our rulemaking request has been accepted. I am hoping that this will initiate the process which typically takes about 6 months. More to come!

Acupuncture for chronic migraine and chronic tension-type headache: **EFFECTIVE DATE: 09/01/2024** If you are having any difficulty getting reimbursed for chronic migraines, please let us know and we can assist. Please reach out to Jami.lifka@lni.wa.gov directly if you have any questions about WAC 296-23-238 Acupuncture rules.

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WAEMA Workgroup on Tension Headaches and Neck Pain: Chaiya has been spearheading a research group to take this project forward to the Health Technology Committee. More to come!

Acupuncture and Eastern Medicine Advisory Committee (AEMAC): – 2025 meeting schedule. Meetings will begin at the time noted. Here is the agenda from the January 19, 2025 meeting: [Agenda \(PDF\)](#)

Date and Location	Activity	Documents
May 19, 2025 – Hybrid (meeting at 10:30 am. Department of Health, 111 Israel Rd. S.E., TC 2 Rm 153 Tumwater, WA 98501	Regular meeting	
August 18, 2025 – Hybrid (meeting begins at 10:30 a.m.) Department of Health, 111 Israel Rd. S.E, TC 2 Rm 153 Tumwater, WA 98501	Regular meeting	
November 17, 2025 – Hybrid (meeting begins 10:30 a.m.) Department of Health, 111 Israel Rd. S.E., TC 2 Rm 153 Tumwater, WA 98501	Regular meeting	

Preproposal Statement of Inquiry (CR-101) Acupuncture and Eastern Medicine Practitioners - Expanding opportunities for English based examination requirements: WA-DOH in consultation with the Acupuncture and Eastern Medicine Advisory Committee (committee) is considering amending WAC 246-803-103 and WAC 246-803-240 to allow the acceptance of the Occupational English Test providing Acupuncture and Eastern medicine practitioner licensing applicants who have completed the required National Certification Commission of Acupuncture and Oriental Medicine (NCCAOM) examinations in languages other than English. Other amendments relevant to application and examination requirements in chapter 246-803 WAC may also be considered. [Filed as WSR 25-04-007.](#)

WAEMA has reached out to the Pharmacy Commission to address the issue of prescribing authority for local anesthesia, which is in your scope of practice. We are still working on the issue, but it has not been resolved at this time...

Use of Ultrasound by Acupuncturists: upon additional review, this authority is already in statute for AEMP's: According to Trina Crawford, Executive Director for Acupuncture and Eastern Medicine “[Link to RCW providing authority for ultrasound:](#) to the providers listed includes AEMP's in this chapter. There is nothing for the committee to recommend to the Secretary since this is in statutory authority already. The indication from the AAG that it is also allowed is codified in our minutes, so there should be no further decision/discussion necessary.”

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2025 Legislative Session

Support HB 1589 (Bronoske, Macri, Shavers, Pollet, Reed)

Maintain access to independent providers by requiring carriers to negotiate provider contracts in good faith!

HB 1589 levels the playing field for health care providers to negotiate fair contracts with health insurers. This bill is necessary so providers can stay in business and remain in network which increases patient access to care. Please see attached letter that was sent to legislators on our behalf, and many other provider groups...



HB 1589 Coalition
Draft one-pager.docx

The public hearing on the bill went really well with around 1,400 people signing on to the bill as Pro and no Con. Hopefully this bill will move forward this session! Just a FYI that it does not include a COLA...there is another bill that does that, but it will not move or get a public hearing this session.

I also testified the first week in session regarding keeping acupuncture and chiropractic in the budget as it was still included in Governor Jay Inslee's proposed budget. We do not know if Governor Ferguson will keep it in the budget or not... He will revise Inslee's budget with his own "Book2" budget as soon as the state revenue forecasts come out in early March. From then on it will be a race to the finish line to get the budget done on time...with significant cuts to address the \$12 billion dollar budget deficit!