



Thurston County Board of Health

Meeting Agenda: 03/10/2026

3:45-5:15 pm

Atrium, 3000 Pacific Ave. SE, Room 110, Olympia

Zoom : <https://us06web.zoom.us/j/88604816712?pwd=aigx07AeQYp6PQG3iacotNgf4nkqki.1>

Meeting ID: 886 0481 6712

Passcode: 055590

	Agenda Item	Notes/Action Item/Next Steps
Call Meeting to Order (pg. 3)	Approval of 03/10/2026 Agenda - Motion made by: - Seconded by: Approval of 02/10/2026 Amended Minutes - Motion made by: - Seconded by:	
Proclamation (pg. 5)	International Day of Transgender Visibility Contact: - Lucas Miller, New Boyz Club - PJ O'Connor, Co-Chair of South Alliance of Older LGBTQ+ Reading of the Proclamation Photo	
Opportunity for the public to address the Board	Opportunity for public testimony provided	
Health Officer & Director Report	Dr. Barbara Villona and Dr. Jen Freiheit submitted a report on departmental and community updates since the previous Board of Health meeting.	
Board Item (pg. 9)	Description: Interview final applicant for Board of Health Youth Representative Contact: Dr. Jen Freiheit, Department Director, PHSS Action: Discussion	
Board Item (pg. 14)	Description: 2026 Board of Health proclamation calendar finalization Contact: Dr. Jen Freiheit, Department Director, PHSS Action: Motion to approve the 2026 Board of Health proclamation calendar	
Board Item (pg. 19)	Description: WSALPHO Legislative Session update 3/2/26 WSALPHO Bill Status Report - Week of February, 23-27, 2026 Contact: Dr. Jen Freiheit, Department Director, PHSS Action: Discussion	

Open Board of Health Discussion & Information Sharing	No items submitted by Board of Health Members	•
Adjournment	• Motion made by: • Seconded by: Chair Adjourns	•

Present:

☐ Carolina Mejia (BoCC), Chair	☐ Clark Gilman, City of Olympia, Member	☐ Dave Watterson, City of Tenino, Member	☐ Emily Clouse (BoCC), Member
☐ Heidi Knadel, Community Member	☐ Kim Coombs, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation	☐ Perla Newton, Community Member, Vice Chair	☐ Norine Wells, Nisqually Indian Tribe
☐ Ray Peters, Squaxin Island Tribe	☐ Wayne Fournier (BoCC). Member	☐ NAME, Youth Representative	



Thurston County Board of Health

Meeting Minutes: February 10, 2026

3:45-5:15 pm
Atrium, 3000 Pacific Ave. SE, Room 110, Olympia

	Agenda Item	Notes/Action Item/Next Steps
Call Meeting to Order (pg. 3)	Approval of Amended 02/10/2026 Agenda - Motion to approve the amended agenda made by: Commissioner Clouse - Seconded by: Dave Watterson 2/10/2026 amended agenda was approved unanimously Approval of 01/13/2026 Minutes - Motion made by: Heidi Knadel - Seconded by: Dave Watterson 1/13/26 minutes were approved unanimously	- Meeting came to order at 3:46pm 2/10/26 Agenda was amended to move the 2026 Board of Health Proclamation calendar finalization item to the March meeting agenda - Introductions were provided and two new Board of Health members were introduced
Proclamation (pg. 6)	National Donor Day (2/14/26) Contacts: - George Sharp, CLEP, Thurston Economic Development Council, Center for Business & Innovation - Rodney Youckton, Community member Reading of the Proclamation Photo	- George Sharp shared his story regarding being a kidney transplant recipient - Rodney Youckton provided a story about his father, Melvin Youckton, who was a heart transplant recipient - Board of Health members provided comments to the speakers and voiced appreciation for their participation
Opportunity for the public to address the Board	Opportunity for public testimony provided	No public testimony offered
Health Officer & Director Report (pg. 8)	Dr. Barbra Villona and Dr. Jen Freiheit submitted a report on departmental and community updates since the previous Board of Health meeting.	- Dr. Villona reviewed the Health Officer and Director's report as to some of the data points specific to measles and Hepatitis B; the Hepatitis B chart illustrates the impact of infant vaccination over time - Nipah virus risk of pandemic was discussed - Answers were provided related to wastewater data as it relates to infectious disease tracking - Jen Freiheit discussed a department win related to Black Lake Pollution Identification and Correction Project - Chair Mejia mentioned the support groups and workshops noted in the report
Department item (pg. 11)	Description: Social Connectedness and Prevention of Isolation Campaign Update – 1 year in review	Jen Freiheit discussed the background for the Social Connectedness and Prevention of Isolation Campaign Update – 1 year in review

	Contact: Brian Windrope, Executive Director, Senior Services for South Sound Action: Discussion	- Jen Freiheit shared PHSS efforts towards this campaign, including - Outreach efforts - Media and engagement analytics - Brian spoke about the impact of the Social Connectedness and Prevention of Isolation declaration upon his organization, other organizations, and the community at large - Brian discussed how work can be done in this vein in south county, beyond food banks
Board Items (pg. 17)	Description: Resolution H-2-2026 in support of Foundational of Public Health Services funding Contact: Dr. Jen Freiheit, Department Director, PHSS Action: Motion to adopt Resolution H-2-2026 and instruct staff to proceed with adding electronic signatures and forwarding to the Washington State Association of Local Public Health Officials	- Motion made by Dave Watterson - Seconded by Commissioner Emily Clouse - Approved unanimously
Board Items (pg. 19)	Description: Interview Applicants for Board of Health Youth Representative Contact: Dr. Jen Freiheit, Department Director, PHSS Action: Motion to Appoint Applicant to the Role of Board of Health Youth Representative	- Youth Representative interviews were conducted with eight of nine applicants - The Board of Health has agreed to reschedule the interview for the 9th candidate before making any further decisions regarding the Youth Representative; requested the Board Clerk proceed with sending out a doodle poll to schedule a special meeting for the interview - The Board was reminded to save their interview notes for the special meeting as they will be requested to provide these to the Board Clerk
Board Item (pg. 24)	Description: 2026 Board of Health proclamation calendar finalization Contact: Dr. Jen Freiheit, Department Director, PHSS Action: Motion to approve the 2026 Board of Health proclamation calendar (May-December)	The Board has decided to move this item to the March meeting; request was made that Board members submit their recommendation to the Board of Health Clerk
Open Board of Health Discussion & Information Sharing	No items submitted by Board of Health members	Board Chair Mejia shared an update regarding anticipated discussion that will occur during the March business meeting and voiced appreciation for the Youth Representative applicants
Adjournment	- Motion made by: Dave Watterson - Seconded by: Commissioner Clouse Chair Adjourns	Meeting adjourned at 5:45pm

Present:

☒ Carolina Mejia (BoCC), Chair	☒ Clark Gilman, Elected Official, City of Olympia	☒ Dave Watterson, Elected Official, City of Tenino	☒ Emily Clouse (BoCC), Member
☒ Heidi Knadel, Community Member	☒ Kim Coombs, Confederated Tribes of the Chehalis Reservation	☒ Perla Newton, Community Member, Vice Chair	☐ NAME, Nisqually Indian Tribe
☐ Ray Peters, Squaxin Island Tribe	☒ Wayne Fournier (BoCC). Member	☐ NAME, Youth Representative	

Proclamation

International Transgender Day of Visibility

***WHEREAS**, International Transgender Day of Visibility was founded in 2009 by U.S. based activist Rachel Crandall to acknowledge and honor the successes achieved by people who identify as transgender, while raising awareness of the work that still needs to be done to save lives within this community; and*

***WHEREAS**, Organizations across the world observe International Transgender Day of Visibility every March 31st to raise awareness about people who identify as transgender, while also drawing attention to the disproportionate levels of poverty, discrimination, and violence the community faces compared to non-transgender people; and*

***WHEREAS**, Data from the Williams Institute identifies Washington state as having one of the most gender-diverse populations in the country, with 1.1% of adults, or roughly 66,3000 individuals identifying as transgender; and*

***WHEREAS**, Local data such as the 2023 City of Olympia discrimination survey, notes that over a quarter of Olympia residents identify as LGBTQ+, with 10% who identify specifically as transgender or nonbinary; and*

***WHEREAS**, Thurston County recognizes the significant contributions made by people that identify as transgender and affirms that they are vital members of our community.*

***NOW THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED**, the Thurston County Board of Health hereby proclaims March 31st as International Transgender Day of Visibility in Thurston County and urges all residents to celebrate the accomplishments made by people who identify as transgender and honor the lives of individuals that have been lost.*

Adopted this 10th day of March 2026 by the Thurston County Board of Health

Carolina Mejia

Emily Clouse

Wayne Fournier

Perla Newton

Ray Peters

Clark Gilman

Heidi Knadel

Dave Watterson

Kim Coombs

Health Officer and Department Director Report 3/10/2026

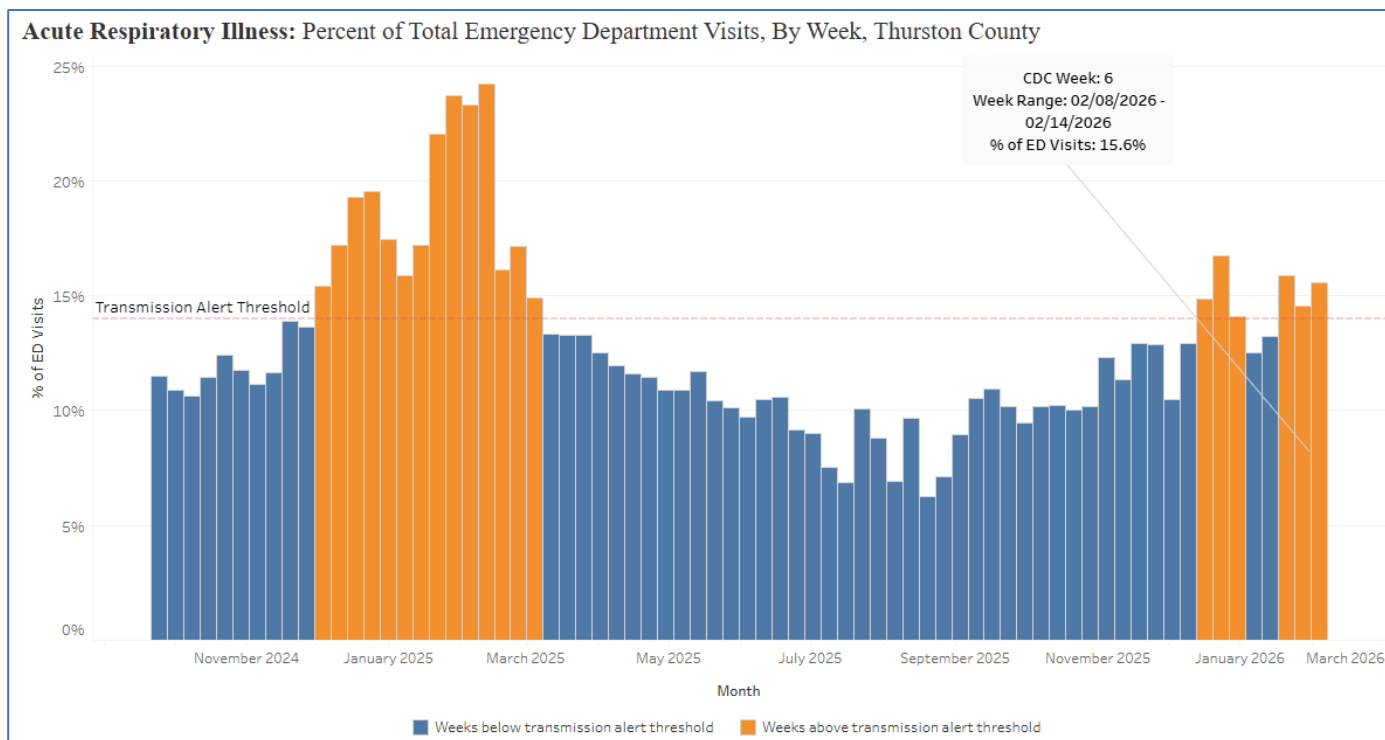
Prepared by Barbra Villona, MD, MPH&TM, DTM&H, FACEP | Thurston County Health Officer and
Jen Freiheit, PhD, MCHES | PHSS Department Director
Updated on 2/25/2026

Thurston County Disease Updates:

The Thurston County Public Health & Social Services Respiratory Dashboard is updated each Wednesday by noon and can be accessed by the public here: www.thurstoncountywa.gov/respiratory-illnesses

ARI/COVID-19/INFLUENZA/RSV

- Statewide Covid rates remain low, with Influenza and RSV elevated and rising.
- In Thurston County, COVID rates are low, Influenza may have plateaued, and RSV ED visits are rising.
- ARI Transmission Rate Alert Threshold.
- When Acute Respiratory Illness accounts for >14% of ED visits, we alert local providers and hospitals so they can use this data to decide when to start and stop universal masking in clinical areas to protect healthcare workers and patients at times of high viral transmission. For background info, see the [Northwest Healthcare Response Network statement](#).



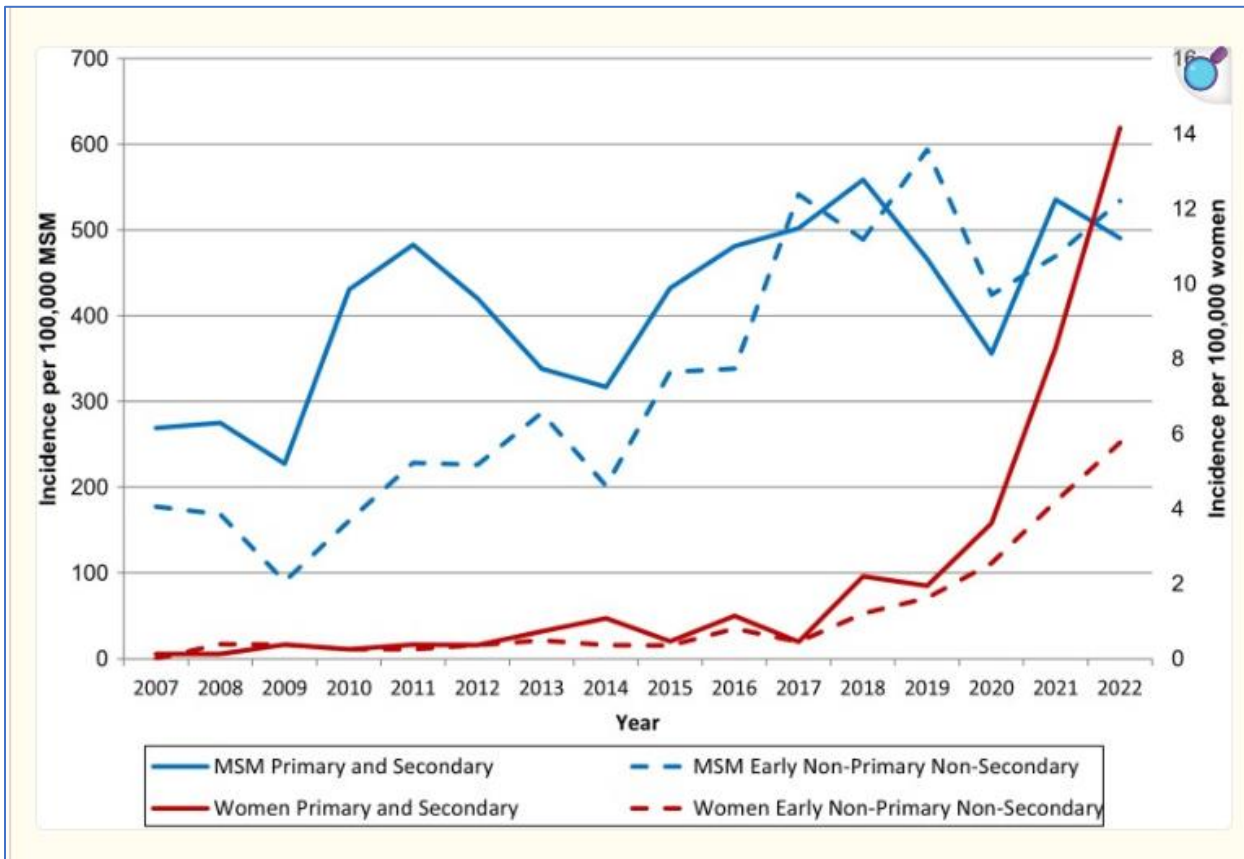
MEASLES

- For the year 2025, the U.S. had a total of 2,255 cases. According to the [Johns Hopkins measles tracker](#), so far in 2026, the US has 1,099 confirmed cases. 94% of these cases are unvaccinated or unknown.
- For the year 2025, Washington had a total of 12 cases. So far in 2026, there have been 26 cases, including the locally transmitted outbreak in Snohomish County. 24 of the WA cases are unvaccinated, while two have an unknown vaccination status.

- Measles survival is associated with unexpected increases in other infections and death for months to years due to [immune amnesia](#). Up to 70% of existing antibodies are eliminated.

SYPHILIS

- The United States has seen a resurgence with cases increasing 80% from 2018 to 2022. There were ~200,000 cases in 2024.
- King County reported a [dramatic rise in infections in women in 2023](#).



Community Activities:

SUPPORT GROUPS:

- [Holding Space: A Support Series for Parents Navigating Pregnancy Loss | Thurston County](#)
 - A free 6-week in-person support series that provides a safe, gentle space for parents who have experienced any type of pregnancy loss, including early termination, miscarriage, or stillbirth.
 - (05/07 - 06/11/2026 Thursdays; 5:30pm-6:45pm at Public Health & Social Services)
- [Drop-In Lactation Support Group | Thurston County](#)
 - March 24 & April 14 from 10:30am-12pm at Public Health & Social Services
- [Together We Parent – Support Group | Thurston County](#)
 - Now Online – the 3rd Wednesday of each month from 10:00am-11:30am

WORKSHOPS:

- [Homeowner Septic Self-Inspection Certification - Registration Required | Thurston County](#)

- March 27 or 28; 9am-1pm

EVENTS:

- [Thurston/Mason County Developmental Disabilities Resource Fair | Thurston County](#)
 - March 19; 4:30pm-7:00pm at ESD 113
- [Create a Healthier Home - Community Presentation | Thurston County](#) - register online
 - March 24; 5pm-6pm at Lacey Timberland Library (receive a FREE safer cleaning kit)
- [Partners in Student Health Meeting | Thurston County](#)
 - March 26; 6pm-7:30pm at ESD 113, RSVP using link above

Departmental Wins:

- Successful visit with the Department of Health Secretary, Dennis Worsham where all Executive Team members shared their innovative programs.
- Successful Board of Health Orientation with two youth applicants attending and learning about PHSS.

Thurston County Board of Health Youth Representative Applicants

Name	Grade	Explain why you are interested in being a Youth Representative on the Thurston County Board of Health	What goal(s) do you plan to achieve during your term as a Youth Representative?	What health-related passion, lived experience, or other perspectives would you like to share with the Board of Health?
Iyla MacDonald	11th	I am interested in this position because I want to stand out to colleges with experience and help my community stay healthy and informed.	hope to learn more about how to help myself and others stay healthy and expand my medical knowledge.	I am currently on the path to becoming a certified nursing assistant and am about to begin working on my clinicals this month after being accepted to continue further in my program.
Normanda Moran	11th	I am interested in healthcare and supporting the wellbeing of my community. Being born outside of the United States has shaped how I view health and access to care, especially for people who may not always have the resources they need. As a student athlete, I also understand how physical, mental, and emotional health all play a role in creating safe schools and strong communities.	During my term as a youth representative, my goal is to advocate for stronger health support in schools, especially mental health resources and access to care for students. I want to ensure youth voices are heard in public health decisions and help bridge the gap between students and health leaders by sharing real experiences from schools and youth communities.	As a high school student athlete currently enrolled in the New Market Professional Medical Career CNA program, my passion for health comes from both my lived experiences and my desires to help people who often canning help themselves. I was born in Jamaica where I saw first hand lack of access to healthcare and resources can impact families and communities. Being a student has also shown me how important health support is within schools. Many young people struggle with physical health, mental health, stress, and injuries, and these challenges sometimes go unnoticed. Through my CNA training, I am learning how compassion, cultural awareness, and advocacy can make a real difference. As a youth representative on the Board of Health I want to help uplift student voices, support healthier school environment and ensure that young people especially those from underserved backgrounds have access to care, education and the support they need.

Thurston County Board of Health Youth Representative Applicants

Susanna Yan	10th	I'm interested in being a Youth Representative on the Thurston County Board of Health because it would be an amazing opportunity to voice and draw more attention/action towards the overall well-being and mental health of youth. Our next generation are the children raised and born now and being on this board and being able to share insight from my youth community to the Board of Health could not only push more initiative to make changes for youth around the city but even globally. I have always had a passion for health/medical topics as my career interest is steering towards Cognitive Neuroscience and counseling with children that have brain disabilities. These issues are big to me and I would be honored to have the opportunity to bring myself closer to that field of work through people that are on the Board of Health.	During my term as a Youth Representative, I hope to start initiatives that drive the community to support each other through all struggles, I would also like to possibly open surveys that aim to understand youth and ways they feel supported. Going back to the initiative aspect, not only raising awareness on health topics but also hosting hands on events that allow people to gain that experience (could be a community CPR training or seizure awareness, how to use bandages on wounded people or things along those lines) I think allowing people to gain that experience alongside actual medical doctors/experienced leaders would be very beneficial to the community as a whole.	I am interested in pursuing Cognitive Neuroscience/Neurology, alongside that I want to also dig into exploring brain development of children (understanding regions in their brains that function to better grasp how they perceive the world from an early age + how brain disabilities may disrupt that function) a passion project I would like to start and continue throughout my college years are making a device or some type of tool that helps little kids tackle with that disability and ease their way through the world without much adversity (at the same time allowing parents and teachers the ability to easily communicate and understand what they need for themselves to function at their best)
Brandon Crites	10th	I'm interested in serving as a Youth Representative on the Thurston County Board of Health because I want to ensure that young people's perspectives are included in public health decisions that affect our community. I'm passionate about promoting wellness, mental health, and access to resources for youth, and I believe my experiences and voice can help bridge the gap between young residents and policymakers. This role would allow me to contribute meaningfully to initiatives that improve health outcomes for everyone in Thurston County.	During my term as a Youth Representative, I plan to focus on concrete actions that directly impact the health and well-being of youth in Thurston County. I want to advocate for expanded mental health support in schools by promoting access to counselors and peer support programs. I also plan to increase awareness of public health resources among teens through workshops and campaigns about services like vaccination clinics, sexual health care, and substance abuse prevention. Additionally, I aim to support initiatives that encourage healthy lifestyles, including physical activity, nutrition education, and safe recreational spaces. Finally, I will actively gather input from young people through surveys and focus groups to ensure their voices are represented in the Board's policy decisions.	I have a deep passion for healthcare, driven by my goal to become a surgeon and achieve a MBA, which gives me a unique perspective on the importance of access to quality medical care and preventive health services. Through my experiences volunteering in healthcare settings and engaging with peers about mental health challenges, I've seen firsthand the impact that awareness, resources, and early support can have on young people's well-being. I hope to bring the perspective of a motivated youth who is committed to both learning from and contributing to public health initiatives that make a real difference in our community.

Thurston County Board of Health Youth Representative Applicants

Yesenia Carbajal Mendez	10th	I am interested in being a Youth Representative on the Thurston County Board of Health because I enjoy giving my opinion and being the voice of the youth who may not have the courage. I am also just interested in meeting new people and learning more about the Board of Health is about.	The goals I plan on achieving during my term as a Youth Representative are advocating more resources to help with mental health issues among fellow youth. Educate and find incentive for youth to no longer vape. Teach everyone about addictions and how to overcome them with resources.	I am very passionate that everyone should have resources to help them with their struggles being addictions, mental health or general wellbeing. I have been part of the counselor community of surrounding schools where I gave my opinion and solutions regarding students struggles on day-to-day life.
Connie Chen	10th	I am interested in being a Youth Representative on the Thurston County Board of Health because I am incredibly passionate on the health of our whole community and giving every single person the chance to live a healthy life. In the future, I plan on conducting research that align with health-related topics, and I believe that if I can interact with my community and hear different perspectives through the Board of Health, I can better decide what to research on and incorporate those perspectives in my research. Mostly though, I want to share my ideas on health care in our community and hearing every voice in our community and implementing it into action.	As Youth Representative, I plan to incorporate voices and feedback I've received in the community and bring it to life. I want to be able to speak for the youth and the problems we face, including drugs, eating disorders, and mental health, and work together with the Board of Health to recognize these issues and do something about it.	Well, as a teenage girl, I've had personal experiences and I've had friends who've dealt with eating disorders, to the point where they wouldn't eat all day. I personally dealt with anorexia, and it was all subconscious. For months, I had incredibly low iron to the point where I would feel light-headed nearly all day, I couldn't sleep at night because of the rashes that would always come out at night, and I was just incredibly unhealthy. A lot of my friends have dealt with the same things as well, and I want to work with the Board of Health to find ways to solve this problem. Youth are incredibly susceptible to societal norms that we'll do anything to fit in. Including not eating and vaping (to suppress the hunger). This turns into mental health problems, and none of this is good. I want to share this perspective to the board of health.
Ellis Kronland	11th	I am a member of the Thurston County Teen Council (a peer education group run through Planned Parenthood, whose main goal is to end the stigmas surrounding sex and sexual health through educating middle school and high school students). I have also spent over 50 hours volunteering at the downtown Olympia location of the Thurston County Food Bank. Both of these experiences have shown me the importance of community health, along with igniting a passion for public health policy and how the policy we pass can	This position directly relates to what I plan to study in college and the career I hope to pursue after. I would set a goal to gain as much experience and knowledge from experts in the public health field who are connected/involved with the board. I am also a strong supporter of harm reduction. I would work towards providing high school and college students with access to naloxone and fentanyl test strips, among other harm reduction tools. Studies have shown that programs like D.A.R.E had little to no effect on	As a teen council member, I bring a unique perspective and a passion for sexual health. I would love to continue to work towards preventing STI transmission and continuing to lower rates of domestic abuse among teens and young adults. Sexual health is an aspect of health that everyone experiences; however, the education surrounding sexual health greatly varies from school to school or based on religious or political values, instead of being based on science and medicine. However, I would argue that sexual education

Thurston County Board of Health Youth Representative Applicants

		dramatically impact and improve the health of our communities and protect the most vulnerable among us. During my time at the food bank this past summer, I would see people come in with severe sunburns from spending all day in the direct sun with no access to proper shade or sunscreen. It's experiences like this that have grown my interest and passion. Young people often get grouped as being uninformed and uninterested, and as a result, our voices and ideas don't get the attention and thought they often deserve. This position provides a chance for youth voices to be heard on a subject that directly touches all of our lives.	whether or not students engaged with drugs and instead used fear tactics to stigmatize addiction and spread misinformation; however, harm reduction acknowledges the fact that young people are using drugs and provides those young people with a level of safety and protection that otherwise wouldn't be there harm reduction also provides a safe space that allows education about the dangers of drug use to fully be absorbed in a shame free way. Teens are much more likely to engage with and are more likely to accept support when they feel understood and supported, as opposed to feeling judged.	is one of the most important things learned in schools because sexual health covers so much more than just pregnancy; it covers STI prevention, birth control methods, and most importantly, consent and what that truly looks like. One of the most important aspects of being a teen council member is being an active resource to my peers, and the biggest part of that is answering questions and during the past two years I have answered dozens of questions related to content, birth control methods, anatomy, and STI prevention methods and every time I get the chance to answer a question it reminds me of how vital sexual healthcare is for teens.
Sarah Wimsett	11th	I am interested in being a Youth Representative on the Thurston County Board of Health for many reasons. First, public health has always been an important part of my life. I have many family members who have worked in public health and through their careers I began to understand the importance of the work of public health. I support the goals and purpose of public health and think it is vital to our community. A big reason why I am interested in being a youth representative is because I believe it is very important to include young people in conversations about the community and the future. Also, I am interested in gaining a deeper understanding of how local government works and the importance of sharing and expressing opinions so that policies can be passed that the community supports.	What I plan to achieve during my term as a Youth Representative is to provide honest feedback from a youth perspective for the Board of Health to help ensure that the youth of Thurston County are considered and represented. The youth of my generation have experienced a lot including COVID-19, lockdown, climate change and the expansion of social media. These factors make our perspective different from adults. It is important that our perspective is considered when making policies that affect the community.	I am specifically passionate about environmental health and prevention. I think that it is very important that we protect the environment for future generations and that we also have a safe and beautiful environment to live in right now. I also think that prevention is really important to the world right now. It is especially important to focus on those in the community who don't have access to healthcare and focusing on getting them accessible resources. Through my volunteering experiences in the community I have seen the lack of resources that many families face, so it is important to me that we focus on helping families get basic needs like food, and a safe place to live.

Thurston County Board of Health Youth Representative Applicants

Evelyn Schrum	11th	I am interested in being a Youth Representative on the Thurston County Board of Health because I would like to contribute to my community through a subject that I am interested in. I want to advocate for my fellow peers in a way that will be meaningful and help to make a real and positive impact. Using my knowledge of healthcare issues through my participation in school clubs like HOSA (Health Occupations Student of America) and Sport medicine, I can offer an informed perspective on mine and my peer's ideas.	As a Youth Representative, my goals during my term as a Youth Representative would include (but not be limited to): Helping to prevent the rise of medical misinformation, both for physical and mental health. Spreading awareness for hygiene in schools elementary and younger, along with making health information more accessible to all. Helping to connect with schools in order to expose the youth to the many healthcare careers available. Finally, Improving my own skills as a leader in this community. Many of these goals would involve reaching out to several different places such as schools and establishments where educational messages can be spread. For example, a stand in an area with many people would be a great way to spread information.	Since my freshman year, I have been greatly interested in the healthcare field. I joined HOSA and Sports medicine clubs in a hope to discover whether healthcare would be right for me. I have been in those clubs for what is going to be three years now, and I have held multiple leadership roles. Healthcare interests me because, in my opinion, there is no more rewarding of a field than one that helps people become happier and healthier. Since joining those programs, I have gone to international competitions from qualifying for health competitions. One of those qualifications being for healthcare issues. Another being for designing the HOSA Washington State pin. These experiences have shown me how diverse and widespread the student healthcare community is. To contribute to my community, during the summer I worked 17 hours of community service at the Thurston County Food Bank, alongside taking a summer program for family medicine. Additionally, as of recent, I have become an admin volunteer at Multicare Home Health & Hospice. I joined this program to assist the community and better my organization skills.
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Board of Health Proclamations

Month	Proposed 2026	BOCC 2026	BOH 2025	BOH 2024	BOH 2023
January	✓ National Poverty Awareness Month	National Human Trafficking Awareness Month (Presentation)	- National Human Trafficking Awareness Month - Birth Defects Awareness Month	No proclamations	No proclamations
February	✓ National Donor Day	African American History Month (Presentation)	- National School Counseling Week - National Donor Day	No proclamations	National Children's Dental Health Month

March	✓ Transgender Day of Visibility	Child Abuse Awareness Month Agricultural Day	- National Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month - International Transgender Day of Visibility	International Transgender Day of Visibility	International Transgender Day of Visibility
April	✓ National Child Abuse Prevention Month	National Counties Month Earth Day	National Child Abuse Prevention Month	Sexually Transmitted Infection (STI)	Volunteer Month

Month	Proposed 2026		2025	2024	2023
April Continued		Autism Awareness Month		Prevention Awareness Month	
May	- Women's Health Month - Mental Health Awareness Month (PHSS and TMBH-ASO) - Better Sleep Month - National Walking Month - National Wildfire Awareness Month - Month of the Military Caregiver - Maternal Mental Health Month - National Asthma and Allergy Awareness Month - Melanoma and Skin Cancer Awareness Month - National Nurses Week - Deaf Awareness Week - National Hospital Week - Composting Day - National Children's Mental Health Awareness Day - Global Accessibility Awareness Day - International Day Against Homophobia, Transphobia, and Biphobia - Hepatitis Testing Day - World No Tobacco Day - World Hand Hygiene Day - International Nurses Day - National Asian and Pacific Islander HIV/AIDS Awareness Day - National Senior Health and Fitness Day	Missing Persons Month Affordable Housing Week	- National Senior Health & Fitness Day - National Walking Month	Maternal Mental Health Awareness Month	National Nurses' Week
June	- PTSD Awareness Month - National Safety Month - National Gun Violence Awareness Month	LGBTQI+ Pride Month	Men's Health Month	Food Safety & Composting Month	Food Safety Day

Month	Proposed 2026		2025	2024	2023
	- Men's Health Week - Drowning Prevention Week - Learning Disability Week - National CPR & AED Awareness Week - National Cancer Survivors Day - National HIV Testing Day - World Environment Day		National Gun Violence Awareness Month (safety)		
July	No BOH Meeting	- Lost Pet Prevention (Other) - Thurston County Fair (Presentation)			
August	- National Breastfeeding Awareness Month - Immunization Awareness Month - National Water Quality Month - National Wellness Month - World Humanitarian Day - National Grief Awareness Day - International Overdose Awareness Day		- National Breastfeeding Awareness Month - International Overdose Awareness Day	- National Breastfeeding Month - Immunization Awareness Month	- National Breastfeeding Month - Immunization Awareness Month

Month	Proposed 2026		2025	2024	2023
September	- Pain Awareness Month - Fall Prevention Month - National Preparedness Month - Baby Safety Month - Suicide Prevention Month (requested by TMBH-ASO) - Get Ready for Flu Season Month - National Suicide Prevention Month - Healthy Aging Month - National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month - Food Safety Education Awareness Month - Sexual Health Awareness Month - SepticSmart Week - World First Aid Day - World's Alzheimer's Day - World Heart Day - International Day of Clean Air - World Water Monitoring Day - World Sexual Health Day - International Day of Awareness of Food Loss and Waste - Family Health and Fitness Day	Recovery Month	- SepticSmart Week - National Preparedness Month	Suicide Prevention Awareness Month	Suicide Prevention Awareness Month
October	- Health Literacy Month - National Breast Cancer Awareness Month - National Disability Employment Awareness Month - Domestic Violence Awareness Month - National Bullying Prevention Month - Healthy Lung Awareness Month - Pregnancy and Infant Loss Awareness Month - Sudden Unexpected Infant Death (SUID) Awareness Month	Manufacturing Day National 4H Youth Justice Awareness Month	- Domestic Violence Awareness Month - International Day of Climate Action	World Homeless Day	National Children's Health Month

Month	Proposed 2026	2025	2024	2023
	• National Health Education Week • International Infection Prevention Week • National Lead Poisoning Prevention Week • National Latinx HIV/AIDS Awareness Day • Internal Day of Climate Action • International Day of Non-Violence • World Homeless Day • Global Handwashing Day • International Day for Disaster Risk Reduction • International Day for the Eradication of Poverty • World Mental Health Day			
November	• No BOH Meeting	Homeless Awareness Month Restorative Justice Week		
December	• Worldwide Food Service Safety Month (both together) • National Handwashing Awareness Week • National Influenza Vaccination Week • National Impaired Driving Prevention Month • Worlds AIDS Day • International Volunteer Day • International Day for Persons with Disabilities • International Human Solidarity Day		National Influenza Vaccination Week	National Family Caregivers Month
				National Impaired Driving Prevention Month

3/2/26 WSALPHO Bill Status Report

High Priority Bills

Bill #	Abbrev. Title	Short Description	Status	Sponsor	Position
SHB 2289 (ESSB 5998)	Operating budget, supp.	Making 2025-2027 fiscal biennium supplemental operating appropriations.	H Rules R	Ormsby	
SHB 2382	Tobacco product excise taxes	Concerning excise taxes on cigarettes, vapor products, and tobacco products.	H Approps	Parshley	Support
ESHB 2442 (SB 6294)	Local government fund use	Providing local governments tax resources and fund flexibility.	S Ways & Means	Berg	Support
ESSB 5998 (SHB 2289)	Operating budget, supp.	Making 2025-2027 fiscal biennium supplemental operating appropriations.	H Passed 3rd	Robinson	
ESSB 6129	Cigarettes, nicotine/tax	Concerning the taxation of cigarettes and other nicotine products.	S Passed 3rd	Robinson	Support
SB 6291	On-site wastewater systems	Concerning on-site wastewater treatment system inspections.	H Rules R	Lovelett	Support
SB 6294 (ESHB 2442)	Local government fund use	Providing local governments tax resources and fund flexibility.	S Ways & Means	Frame	Support

Medium Priority Bills

Bill #	Abbrev. Title	Short Description	Status	Sponsor	Position
ESHB 2238	Statewide food security	Concerning statewide food security.	S Ways & Means	Reeves	Support
SHB 2257 (ESSB 6113)	Tax administration	Concerning taxes administered by the department of revenue.	H Rules R	Berg	Concerns
SHB 2360 (SSB 5951)	Albuterol access in schools	Expanding access to albuterol in public and private schools.	S Passed 3rd	Donaghy	Concerns
HB 2385	Medicaid access program	Concerning the medicaid access program.	S Ways & Means	Macri	Support
ESHB 2532	Nitrous oxide sale	Concerning the sale and distribution of nitrous oxide.	S Passed 3rd	Timmons	Support
ESSB 6113 (SHB 2257)	Tax administration	Concerning taxes administered by the department of revenue.	H Finance	Frame	Concerns

Low Priority Bills

Bill #	Abbrev. Title	Short Description	Status	Sponsor	Position
ESHB 2110	Specialty care transports	Concerning personnel for ambulance service interfacility specialty care transports.	S 2nd Reading	Schmick	
SHB 2152 (SB 5900)	Cannabis/health facilities	Permitting the medical use of cannabis by qualifying patients in specified health care facilities.	S Ways & Means	Kloba	
ESHB 2168 (SSB 5933)	Overdose mapping information	Facilitating the rapid sharing of overdose mapping information for overdose prevention.	S Ways & Means	Manjarrez	Support

SHB 2239	Family burial grounds	Providing Washingtonians and their loved ones with location choices for interment of remains.	S 2nd Reading	Abell	Neutral
SSB 5923	Hospitals in Skagit county	Concerning critical access hospital designations in Skagit county.	H Exec Action	Muzzall	Support
ESSB 5975 (HB 2344)	Safe cookware	Providing consumer access to safe cookware and interstate and international trade certainty in the regulation of lead in cookware.	H Rules R	Harris	
SB 5988 (HB 2437)	Opioid treatment prg. fees	Establishing fee authority for accreditation services provided to opioid treatment programs by the department of health.	H Exec Action	Robinson	Support
SB 6196	Kratom taxation	Taxing kratom.	S Ways & Means	Saldana	Support

Monitoring Bills

Bill #	Abbrev. Title	Short Description	Status	Sponsor	Position
E2SHB 2251	Climate commit. act accounts	Concerning climate commitment act accounts.	S Transportation	Fitzgibbon	
ESHB 2476	Theater licenses/alcohol	Modifying the spirits, beer, and wine theater license.	S 2nd Reading	Dufault	Neutral
SSB 5936	Human trafficking	Concerning prevention of and remedies for human trafficking.	H Rules R	Orwall	Neutral
SB 6188 (HB 2494)	Asbestos training rules	Concerning the department of labor and industries' authority to enact rules related to regulating asbestos training.	H Rules R	Hunt	Neutral

Other Bills

Bill #	Abbrev. Title	Short Description	Status	Sponsor	Position
2SHB 2145 (E2SSB 5981)	340B drug pricing program	Protecting patient access to discounted medications and health care services through Washington's health care safety net by preventing manufacturer limitations on the 340B drug pricing program.	H Rules R	Thai	
ESHB 2225 (ESSB 5984)	AI companion chatbots	Concerning regulation of artificial intelligence companion chatbots.	S 2nd Reading	Callan	
ESSB 5984 (ESHB 2225)	AI companion chatbots	Concerning regulation of artificial intelligence companion chatbots.	H Rules R	Wellman	

Week of February, 23-27, 2026

The opposite house policy cutoff passed this week, shifting the Legislature's focus to the next major committee deadline, opposite house fiscal cutoff. Any legislation with budget implications must clear this step by tomorrow, Monday, March 2, or it will be considered dead for the session unless deemed necessary to implement the budget (NTIB). Also happening this week, budget writers in both the Washington State House and Senate unveiled their respective budget proposals, marking a critical step as the legislature moves into the final weeks of the 2026 session. The releases set the stage for intense negotiations over funding priorities, as well as decisions that will shape state programs and services in the coming fiscal year.

A few highlights include:

- Rep. Michelle (Caldier) Valdez a six term Republican lawmaker from LD-26 announced she will not seek reelection in 2026.
- HB 2242 passed both chambers and is on its way to the Governor. This bill ensures vaccine coverage in the state follows science-based recommendations issued at the state level rather than by federal guidance that was recently reshaped by Health Secretary Robert F. Kennedy Jr., who removed vaccine experts from across the country from the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP). The legislation requires insurers to cover immunizations recommended by Washington's health authorities and aligns the state with guidance developed through the West Coast Health Alliance, which Washington formed with neighboring states after federal changes. The law is intended to preserve no-cost preventive care access and keep vaccine policy grounded in expert consensus despite shifting federal recommendations.
- Sen. Dhingra's attempt to curb soaring legal payouts by Washington state and local governments, SB 6239, stalled in a House Committee despite bipartisan Senate support. Because of grave concerns about mounting costs, the bill aimed to reduce expenses by resolving more claims outside traditional court proceedings, but faced strong opposition from trial lawyers and survivor advocates who argued it would hinder access to justice. House leadership, including Laurie Jenkins, said the measure isn't ready to move forward, though discussions may continue for future sessions as governments confront hundreds of millions in annual payouts and growing budget pressure.

Operating Budgets

The operating budget plans (HB 2289 and SB 5998) total approximately \$79.2–\$79.3 billion, an increase from the enacted biennial budget of about \$77.8 billion. Both proposals assume

passage of the Millionaire's Tax. Both proposals include targeted reductions for state agencies and higher education, as well as shifts in one-time funding sources, with differing approaches to the use of climate-related revenues. Each budget relies on a withdrawal of more than \$700 million from the state's Budget Stabilization Account (rainy day fund) to help balance spending. Budget writers cite inflation, increased caseloads, and other near-term cost pressures as justification for drawing on reserves. A major driver of new spending is the sharp increase in tort liability legal judgments and settlement costs against state agencies. The Senate proposal sets aside roughly \$1 billion for these obligations, while the House allocates about \$400 million, one of the most significant differences between the two plans. Another major difference is how each Chamber funds the Working Families Tax Credit. Both the Governor (\$569 M) and the House (\$330 M) use CCA revenue and the Senate relies on other sources of general fund revenue. The House also plans to replace the CCA funds using surplus money from a pension account for police and firefighters, another controversial proposal (HB 2034). Republican lawmakers have criticized the proposals for increasing overall spending and relying on reserves and other one-time resources rather than structural budget solutions.

On Friday, SB 5998 passed the Senate chamber, 30-19 along partisan lines. On Saturday the House passed SB 5998 52-42 with 5 people excused and Democrats Rule Shavers, Timmons and Walen joining Republicans in voting nay. Operating budget writers will enter conference first part of Week 8.

Additional Reading: Given that estimated shortfall, how do the Senate and House operating budget proposals balance the budget? Emily Makings of the Washington Research Council provides [her estimate of the size of the current shortfall, and how the Senate and House would close it](#).

Transportation Budgets

While the supplemental transportation plans share many policy priorities, they differ in scale, financing strategy, and their balance between near-term investment and long-term debt management. Both offer solutions that are keeping the ERFC forecast in mind - the forecast released earlier in February 2026 is decreased by \$101 million for the 25-27 period compared to November of 2025; the 27-29 period is decreased by \$86 million.

The bipartisan Senate proposal (SB 6005) would add approximately \$1.5 billion in new investments, financed largely through a \$2 billion bond package (SB 6225). The plan focuses on accelerating highway and bridge preservation, improving Washington State Ferries reliability

and terminal infrastructure, advancing safety improvements on high-risk corridors, supporting climate and electric vehicle infrastructure, and repairing storm and flood damage. Senate leaders describe the approach as a way to address urgent maintenance needs and move projects forward more quickly without raising new taxes.

The House Democrat proposal (HB 2306) totals about \$16.5 billion and reflects a more cautious fiscal approach amid declining gas tax revenues, rising construction costs, and growing long-term obligations. It includes funding for highway and bridge preservation, ferry operations and capital timelines, targeted pedestrian and bicycle safety projects, and multimodal investments such as youth rail access and mobility programs during major construction. The proposal also plans for major future costs, including fish passage barrier removal, while relying primarily on existing bond capacity rather than authorizing significant new debt.

Despite these differences, both proposals emphasize maintenance over expansion, invest in ferry system reliability, support safety improvements, and maintain funding for climate and multimodal programs. Negotiations are expected to focus on the appropriate level of new bonding, the pace of preservation work, and how best to balance immediate infrastructure needs with long-term fiscal sustainability.

On Friday, SB 6005 passed the Senate chamber unanimously and on Saturday the House passed also passed SB 6005 unanimously. Transportation budget writers will enter into conference first part of Week 8.

Capital Budgets

Both proposals build on the \$7.5 billion 2025–27 capital budget adopted last year and emphasize job creation, housing, and community infrastructure. Key differences center on overall spending levels, Climate Commitment Act allocations, and the balance between expanded housing and climate investments versus the Senate’s emphasis on resilience and core infrastructure.

The House proposal (HB 2295) takes a more expansionary approach, with a strong emphasis on housing and Climate Commitment Act investments. It includes \$221 million for housing and homelessness, bringing total biennial housing investments to nearly \$1 billion, as well as \$284 million for clean energy and decarbonization. Additional funding supports habitat restoration, salmon recovery, energy efficiency, community climate grants, and \$78 million for K–12 school construction. The plan also funds a range of local and state facility needs, including flood

response, tribal resilience, and improvements at Western State Hospital and Department of Corrections facilities.

The Senate proposal (SB 6003) reflects a smaller infrastructure strategy. It includes \$150 million for affordable housing, \$93.6 million for school construction, and major investments in disaster response and water systems, including \$50 million for flood recovery and preparedness and \$20 million for irrigation, fish passage, and water conservation. Senate leaders also direct Climate Commitment Act resources toward focused initiatives such as a \$50 million clean energy revolving loan program (Washington Builds), agricultural methane reduction, environmental cleanup, and \$38.6 million for tribal clean energy and climate resilience.

On Friday, SB 6003 passed the Senate chamber unanimously. The House is expected to consider SB 6003 on Monday and conference will commence 1-2 days after floor passage.

Millionaire's Tax

The proposed Millionaire's Tax (SB 6346) was heard again this week in the House Finance Committee. A total of 284 individuals signed in to testify, and 129,687 people registered positions through the Legislature's online system, with roughly 90% opposed.

However, supporters of the measure have raised concerns about the accuracy of those figures. The coalition Invest in Washington Now alleges that approximately 37,000 "con" sign-ins may have been duplicate or fraudulent. Some submissions reportedly used the names of public officials such as former Congressman Derek Kilmer (D) and organizational leaders such as Larry Delaney (WEA) and Adam Glickman (SEIU 775) without their consent. Supporters have asked the Washington State Attorney General Nick Brown and House Clerk Bernard Dean to investigate, arguing the inflated numbers could misrepresent public sentiment. Indeed, the entire situation could throw sign-ins into question. In response, House Finance Committee Chair Rep. April (D-44) issued this statement:

"Public comments and feedback to proposed policy is a critical aspect of our work in the Legislature. It allows us to more easily hear from constituents who may not be able to participate in the legislative process in-person. It's become clear, however, that the system is easy to manipulate. Following reports of impersonation from concerned stakeholders who had their information misused to sign in against SB 6346, initial investigation into the committee sign in reports have shown potentially tens of thousands of instances of fraudulent or duplicate data. Investigations into the full extent of the manipulation are ongoing through the Chief Clerk's Office, as are plans to make system improvements to prevent this sort of abuse in the

future. In addition, the Washington State Attorney General's Office has been informed of the situation and alerted to the need for possible investigation. To those who participated in the manipulation of the public comment system, I want to be clear: your efforts have not benefited your cause and have in fact done damage to the democratic process and called into question every sign in on this bill."

On Friday, the House Finance Committee moved SB 6346 out of committee on a 9-6 vote with Rep. Walen voting no with the Republicans. The bill moved with a striker and multiple amendments to the striker including:

- Provides a deduction from Washington base income for 90 percent of Washington allocated gambling losses incurred in the current taxable year with exceptions.
- Provides an exclusion for income earned by a nonresident participating as a keynote speaker, panelist, or moderator at a convention or trade show with requirements.
- Changes the revenue distribution to the Local Government Public Defense Funding Stabilization Account (Account) to \$150,000,000 per fiscal year.
- Adds first-class city pension proceeds to types of pension income subject to this act.
- Revises changes made in 2024 to certain sales and use taxes and business and occupation taxes. These changes are subject to a severability clause. The changes include:
 - Changing the sales tax on services on "live presentations" to exclude before and after school care provided in-person and onsite by elementary schools and presentations given by nonprofits.
 - Creating a retail sales and use tax exemption for all new service taxes created in ESSB 5814 (2025) for K-12 schools, school districts, and educational service districts.
 - Exempting any Washington taxable income attributable to wholesale sales of food and food ingredients sold by wholesalers to retailers not under common ownership from the business and occupation tax 0.5 percent surcharge implemented in ESHB 2081 (2025).
- Provides retail sales and use tax exemptions for diapers.
- Clarifies the treatment of income received by members of federally recognized Indian tribes secured by treaty, Executive Order, or an Act of Congress.
- Creates an advisory group to assist the DOR in implementing the income tax program and requires reports by the DOR to the Legislature in 2026 and 2027.
- Removes the early expiration of the business and occupation surcharge
- Changes the repeal date of the changes to the tax on certain retail sales on services, excluding advertising services, enacted in ESHB 5814 (2025) from January 1, 2030 to January 1, 2029.

Gov. Ferguson said the House committee's revised "millionaires' tax" proposal still falls short of what he wants, warning that it "has a long way to go" and that lawmakers are running out of time to fix it. While he supports the general idea of the tax, his main criticism is that the bill does not direct a large enough share of the revenue toward tax relief for families and small businesses, which he has consistently demanded. Overall, his response signals openness to the policy but clear dissatisfaction with this version's balance between raising revenue and providing direct taxpayer relief.

This bill had passed the Senate chamber on February 16th, 27-22 with Democrats Cortes, Hansen, and Krishnadasan voting with the Republicans. It is unclear when the full House chamber will consider a floor vote but expect this vote to have an impact on the fate of dozens of bills due to the floor time that will be dedicated to its consideration and passage.

Important Dates

March 2 – Fiscal Committee Cutoff (Opposite House)

March 6 – Floor Cutoff (Opposite House)

March 12 – Sine Die