

2018 Legislative Priorities

- **Protect the Health Care Safety Net**
 - **Pass a Capital Budget that Increases Oral Health Capacity**
 - **Preserve Patients' Ability to Maintain their Providers or Clinic of Choice**
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At a time of turmoil and uncertainty at the federal level, community health centers (CHCs) remain unwaveringly committed to serving the most vulnerable and underserved in the state. CHCs ensure that regardless of a person's ability to pay, cultural or language needs, or other factors, they have access to quality, affordable health care. As Washington's health care safety net providers, CHCs have been committed partners with the state in expanding access, increasing capacity, and assisting individuals to enroll in and maintain health coverage. To move forward with these gains, our focus is to protect the health care safety net, increase oral health capacity, and ensure patients can continue to be cared for by their providers or clinic of choice.

Protect the Health Care Safety Net. Washington's state budget continues to face pressure under the weight of competing fiscal priorities and federal attempts to undermine Medicaid and the Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP). We will be vigilant in monitoring actions in the legislature to ensure no cuts are made to the health care safety net, which provides access to health care for the most vulnerable individuals in the state. We will focus on ensuring that Medicaid coverage remains robust and that coverage options for currently eligible enrollees remain in place. The legislature must continue to protect existing health care safety net programs.

At the center of these efforts will be ensuring that children enrolled in CHIP continue to have coverage. Congress has failed to provide stable, long-term funding for CHIP, which threatens coverage for about 53,000 children and 5,000 women. In the absence of federal action, the legislature should commit adequate state funding to ensure that CHIP enrollees continue to maintain coverage.

Pass a Capital Budget that Increases Oral Health Capacity. In 2017, the legislature signaled its commitment to increasing oral health capacity by investing \$12.6 million in capital expenditures for CHCs to build new or expand existing dental clinics. However, the legislature adjourned this summer without passing a biennial capital budget. The sooner the legislature passes the capital budget, the sooner CHCs can provide access to new patients, many of whom do not have access to oral health services today. These patients cannot wait any longer.

Preserve Patients' Ability to Maintain their Providers or Clinic of Choice. For our state's 1.7 million Medicaid patients, maintaining a relationship with their primary care providers or clinic in their own community is essential in promoting health and supporting a whole person approach to care. Without choice, patients' access to providers and critical health care services they need is disrupted.

As the state moves towards implementing Integrated Managed Care (IMC), it must ensure that Medicaid patients continue to have this choice. The Health Care Authority's recent efforts to limit the number of Medicaid managed care organizations (MCOs) in certain regions significantly jeopardize patient choice. The legislature should preserve patients' ability to maintain their providers or clinic of choice by permitting the existing five contracted MCOs that meet certain minimum standards to continue serving patients in regions transitioning to IMC.

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