

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SJR 8206

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As of January 27, 2026

**Brief Description:** Amending the Constitution to establish a right to affordable health care.

**Sponsors:** Senators Hasegawa, Chapman, Lias, Lovelett, Nobles, Saldaña, Slatter, Stanford, Valdez and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Health & Long-Term Care: 1/29/26.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Amends the state Constitution recognizing that it is the state's obligation to ensure that every Washington resident has access to cost-effective, clinically appropriate, and affordable health care as a fundamental right.

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### SENATE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH & LONG-TERM CARE

**Staff:** Julie Tran (786-7283)

**Background:** Amending the State Constitution. The state Constitution provides a method for the adoption of amendments to the Constitution. To amend the Constitution, a joint resolution must be passed by a two-thirds majority of both houses of the Legislature. To be enacted, the proposed amendment must be placed on the next general election ballot and must be approved by a simple majority of the voters.

The Constitution provides requirements for two methods of publicity for proposed constitutional amendments. The first is a requirement that the Secretary of State send a copy of the proposed amendment, with arguments for and against the proposal, to every residence in the state. The second is a requirement that notice of the proposed amendment be published in every legal newspaper in the state at least four times during the four weeks preceding the election.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Access to Health Care Coverage in Washington State. The Health Care Authority (HCA) is the state's largest health care purchase. HCA purchases care for nearly 3 million Washington residents through Apple Health Medicaid, the Public Employees Benefits Board Program, the School Employees Benefits Board Program, and as the designated single state authority for behavioral health.

The Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) regulates insurance by:

- monitoring insurer solvency;
- protecting and educating insurance consumers;
- reviewing and approving insurers' rates and policy forms;
- licensing and overseeing insurance producers such as brokers and agents;
- reducing insurance fraud and unlawful activities; and
- rulemaking and implementation of legislation.

OIC regulates fully insured health plans in Washington State, which includes both individual and small group market options. These health plans cover over 1 million Washington residents. For 2026 individual health insurance market, 14 health insurers have been approved to sell health plans in the state.

Federal law preempts the state and OIC from regulating self-funded plans. Self-funded plans cover approximately 2.3 million Washington residents.

As of 2023, the uninsured rate in Washington State was 4.8 percent.

**Summary of Bill:** At the next general election, the Secretary of State must submit the constitutional amendment to the voters for their approval and ratification, or rejection, that recognizes the state's obligation to ensure that every resident of Washington has access to cost-effective, clinically appropriate, and affordable health care as a fundamental right.

The amendment provides that this state obligation must be balanced against the public interest in funding other essential public services, and any remedy arising from an action brought against the state to enforce this right may not interfere with the balance against the public interest in funding other essential public services.

The Secretary of State must publish notice of the amendment at least four times during the four weeks preceding the election in every legal newspaper in the state.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Available.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Subject to ratification by voters at the next general election.