

**RCW 50B.04.900 Findings—2019 c 363.** The legislature finds that:

(1) Long-term care is not covered by medicare or other health insurance plans, and the few private long-term care insurance plans that exist are unaffordable for most people, leaving more than ninety percent of seniors uninsured for long-term care. The current market for long-term care insurance is broken: In 2002, there were one hundred two companies offering long-term care insurance coverage, but today that number is only twelve.

(2) The majority of people over sixty-five years of age will need long-term services and supports within their lifetimes. The senior population has doubled in Washington since 1980, to currently over one million, and will more than double again by 2040. Without access to insurance, seniors must rely on family care and spend their life savings down to poverty levels in order to access long-term care through medicaid. Middle class families are at the greatest risk because most have not saved enough to cover long-term care costs. When seniors reach the point of needing assistance with eating, dressing, and personal care, they must spend down to their last remaining two thousand dollars before they qualify for state assistance, leaving family members in jeopardy for their own future care needs. In Washington, more than eight hundred fifty thousand unpaid family caregivers provided care valued at eleven billion dollars in 2015. Furthermore, family caregivers who leave the workforce to provide unpaid long-term services and supports lose an average of three hundred thousand dollars in their own income and health and retirement benefits.

(3) Paying out-of-pocket for long-term care is expensive. In Washington, the average cost for medicaid in-home care is twenty-four thousand dollars per year and the average cost for nursing home care is sixty-five thousand dollars per year. These are costs that most seniors cannot afford.

(4) Seniors and the state will not be able to continue their reliance on family caregivers in the near future. Demographic shifts mean that fewer potential family caregivers will be available in the future. Today, there are around seven potential caregivers for each senior, but by 2030 that ratio will decrease to four potential caregivers for each senior.

(5) Long-term services and supports comprise approximately six percent of the state operating budget, and demand for these services will double by 2030 to over twelve percent. This will result in an additional six billion dollars in increased near-general fund costs for the state by 2030.

(6) An alternative funding mechanism for long-term care access in Washington state could relieve hardship on families and lessen the burden of medicaid on the state budget. In addition, an alternative funding mechanism could result in positive economic impact to our state through increased state competition and fewer Washingtonians leaving the workforce to provide unpaid care.

(7) The average aging and long-term supports administration medicaid consumer utilizes ninety-six hours of care per month. At current costs, a one hundred dollars per day benefit for three hundred sixty-five days would provide complete financial relief for the average in-home care consumer and substantial relief for the average facility care consumer for a full year or more.

(8) Under current caseload and demographic projections, an alternative funding mechanism for long-term care access could save the medicaid program eight hundred ninety-eight million dollars in the 2051-2053 biennium.

(9) As the state pursues an alternative funding mechanism for long-term care access, the state must continue its commitment to promoting choice in approved services and long-term care settings. Therefore, any alternative funding mechanism program should be structured such that:

(a) Individuals are able to use their benefits for long-term care services in the setting of their choice, whether in the home, a residential community-based setting, or a skilled nursing facility;

(b) The choice of provider types and approved services is the same or greater than currently available through Washington's publicly funded long-term services and supports;

(c) Transitions from private and public funding sources for consumers are seamless;

(d) Long-term care health status data is collected across all home and community-based settings; and

(e) Program design focuses on the need to provide meaningful assistance to middle class families.

(10) The creation of a long-term care insurance benefit of an established dollar amount per day for three hundred sixty-five days for all eligible Washington employees, paid through an employee payroll premium, is in the best interest of the state of Washington. [2019 c 363 § 1.]