

John Bramhall, MD, PhD
President

January 17, 2025

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Delivered via email

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Honorable Members of the Senate and House of Representatives,

During the 2025 session it is imperative that Washington state take action to promote access to care for Medicaid enrollees by increasing reimbursement rates for the delivery of primary and specialty care. Passage of the Medicaid Access Program ([HB 1392](#) and [SB 5372](#))—which maximizes federal funds to support investments in our state’s Medicaid program—is the top priority of the Washington State Medical Association, supported by the undersigned physician community partners.

Washington state has a long history of supporting health care reform and increasing access to quality care. Ten years ago, the WSMA and many other health, social, and equity organizations came together to push for the expansion of Medicaid in our state.

It was the right thing to do, and we were successful in bringing insurance coverage to a million more Washingtonians. About 20% of the state’s population is enrolled in Washington’s Medicaid program (known as Apple Health) today.

While we have made significant improvements to expanding coverage, the high number of Medicaid enrollees has intensified another problem: ensuring meaningful access to medical services. Despite the state’s high dependence on Medicaid for coverage, the Washington State Legislature has not kept pace with rising costs for the physicians and advanced care practitioners providing services for those patients. The underpayment forces too many physicians, practices, and medical groups to turn patients away.

Washington has not increased reimbursement across the board for health care services in decades and is one of the worst states in the nation when it comes to reimbursing specialty health care services. The result is too many people without timely and reliable access to critical health services, including specialty care such as cancer diagnoses, joint replacements, and other complex health care needs. In a 2023 survey of Medicaid enrollees, nearly four in 10 had been denied an appointment; four in 10 had trouble getting an appointment for a specialty referral for follow-up treatment; and one in four had trouble getting an appointment for medical treatment.

It doesn’t have to be this way. We can do better, and we can do it without impacting

the state's general fund by passing the Medicaid Access Program. The funding mechanism at the heart of the Medicaid Access Program, known as a covered lives assessment, will allow the state to maximize use of federal matching funds to support our state's Medicaid program. This will:

- Increase Medicaid rates to Medicare equivalents;
- Ensure that reimbursement better reflects the cost of delivering care;
- Encourage more physicians and advanced practitioners to participate in Medicaid networks; and, most importantly,
- Improve access to care for Washingtonians, especially underserved and rural communities and people of color who disproportionately depend on Medicaid.

The Medicaid Access Program's covered lives assessment, similar to assessments already in place for hospitals, nursing homes, and ambulances, is designed to leverage federal funding to support investments in Washington's Medicaid program. By assessing insurers a small amount based on their enrollment (primarily Medicaid managed care organizations), Washington can draw down hundreds of millions in federal funds annually to provide the state with revenue to fund rate increases. This allows physicians and advanced practitioners to see more Medicaid patients and will make a significant difference to the health of the two million Washington residents who need it the most.

We're grateful for the progress and momentum that was created around the Medicaid Access Program last year. It's time to support our state's patients and physician community by passing the program into law in the 2025 session.

Sincerely,



John Bramhall, MD, PhD
President

The undersigned medical and health associations, state specialty societies, county medical societies, clinics, and medical groups have signed on in support.

State Medical Associations

Mark Baldwin, DO
President
Washington Osteopathic Medical Association

Joshua Lumsden
President
Washington Academy of Physician Assistants



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Jennifer Yahne, MHA, CMPE
President
Washington State Healthcare Leaders
Association



Public Health

Erika Lautenbach
President
Washington State Association Local Public
Health Officers



State Specialty Societies

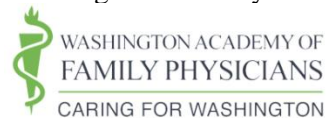
James Ridgway, MD
President
Northwest Academy of Otolaryngology
**Northwest Academy
of Otolaryngology**



Travis Rice-Stitt, MD
President
Pacific Northwest Society of Pathologists



Carla Ainsworth, MD, MPH
President
Washington Academy of Family Physicians



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Beth Ebel, MD, FAAP, MsC, MPH
President
Washington Chapter of the American Academy
of Pediatrics



Joshua Frank, MD, FACEP
President
Washington Chapter of the American College of
Emergency Physicians



Chris Knight, MD, FACP
Governor
Washington Chapter of the American College of
Physicians



Ravi S. Ramasamy, MD
President
Washington State Council of Child and
Adolescent Psychiatry



Jay Lopez, MD
President
Washington State Medical Oncology Society



Richard Cheng, MD, FACC
President
Washington Chapter of the American College of
Cardiology



Alson Burke, MD
Section Chair
Washington Chapter of the American College of
Obstetricians and Gynecologists



Kate Impastato, MD
President
Washington Society of Plastic Surgeons



Meredith Sheedy, MD
President
Washington State Dermatology Association



Pravin Khemani, MD
President
Washington State Neurological Society



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Greg Brown, MD
President
Washington State Orthopaedic Association



Edward Kim, MD
President
Washington State Radiological Society



Eric Q. Konnick, MD, MS
President
Washington State Society of Pathologists



Justin Stamschror, MD
President
Washington State Psychiatric Association



Erik Condon, MD, FASA
President
Washington State Society of Anesthesiologists



Matt Uhlman, MD
President
Washington State Urology Society



County Medical Societies

Saravanan Kasthuri MD
President
Benton Franklin County Medical Society



Tim Clement, MD, FASA
President
Chelan-Douglas County Medical Society



Bruce Andison, MD
President
Clark County Medical Society



Nancy L. Belcher, PhD, MPA
Chief Executive Officer
King County Medical Society



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Dawson Brown, MD
President
Kitsap County Medical Society



Garrett Jeffery, DO, FAAFP
President
Northwest Washington Medical Society



Julian Arroyo, MD
President
Pierce County Medical Society



Gerald Yorioka, MD
President
Snohomish County Medical Society



Saima Ahmad, MD
President
Spokane County Medical Society



Margaret A. MacLeod, MD
Trustee
Thurston-Mason County Medical Society



Katina Rue, DO, FAAFP, FACOFP
President
Yakima County Medical Society



Clinics and Medical Groups

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Chief Executive Officer
Allegro Pediatrics



Sung-Won Kim, MD
ENT Associates

Kevin Martin, MD, FAAFP
Chief Medical Officer
Kittitas Valley Healthcare



Aaron Peake
Chief Administrative Officer
Pacific Medical Centers



Cara Beatty, MD
Chief Executive Officer
Providence Clinical Network,
Eastern Washington-Montana Region



Jay Burghart
Chief Executive Officer
The Doctors Clinic



Basma Raees, MD
Evergreen Pediatrics

Saravanan Kasthuri, MD
Medical Director
Northwest Endovascular Surgery



John D. Pryor, MD
President/Chair
Proliance Surgeons



Scott Foster-Edwards, MD
Chief Executive Officer
Providence Clinical Network,
Puget Sound Region



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Matt Forge
Chief Executive Officer
Pullman Regional Hospital



Douglas Seiler, MD
President
TRA Medical Imaging



- Tacoma Radiology
- Union Avenue Open MRI
- Carol Milgard Breast Center
- Medical Imaging Northwest

Gregg Miller, MD
Chief Medical Officer
Vituity



Radia's Washington locations:

- Evergreen Radia
- Radia Imaging Center Holdings
- South Sound Radiologists Inc.
- Swedish Edmonds Radia

Hunter Wessells, MD, FACS
President
UW Physicians

Philip Lund, MD
President
Washington Managed Imaging



WMI member groups:

- Bellingham Advanced Medical Imaging
Vantage Radiology & Diagnostic Services
- Mount Baker Imaging
- Northwest Radiologists Olympic Medical
Imaging Consultants
- Skagit Digital Imaging
- Skagit Radiology

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Jeff Peterson, MD
President
Washington Rheumatology Alliance



Jennifer Jorgensen, MD, FASGE
President
Wenatchee Valley Medical Group



Jeremy Tesar, MD
Rob Ast, MD
Westsound Emergency Physicians

