

Health Care and Human Services

[Encompasses previous planks of Health Care, Human Services, and Reducing Gun Violence...]

Health care is a basic human right. Government should work to improve our overall health, while assuring access to high-quality, affordable care for everyone. Patients must have the right to access and choice between all lawful medical treatment options, without hindrance by institutions exercising religious doctrine and regardless of ability to pay. As a caring community, we must provide a safety net of social services that meets the basic needs of people, especially those on the margins of society, so they can attain their full potential. We believe that laws should protect all the lives of all people of our state, especially vulnerable populations, such as our school children, from gun violence.

We believe:

We Call For:

National Level	State Level

- An affordable universal single-payer system to provide the most equitable and effective health care, serving both individual and public health needs;
- Our state to establish a single payer system for Washington residents until such time as a single-payer system is enacted nationally;
- Support for transition assistance for any employee who loses their job as the result of the establishment of single-payer system;
- Sustained Washington State non-Medicaid funding to protect the vulnerable populations not covered by Federal Medicaid;
- Adequate funding for rural hospitals and community health centers, and special rules that make it possible for them to operate in rural areas;
- Comprehensive health care coverage – including outpatient and inpatient services; acute and long-term care; home care, palliative care, end-of-life counseling, and hospice; behavioral and mental health care and substance-use programs; dental, vision and hearing services; preventive services; family planning with contraception and access to safe abortions; prescription drugs, medical supplies, durable medical equipment and medical technology; and rehabilitation;
- Passage of a comprehensive "Patients' Bill of Rights" Law affirming that medical decisions should be patient-centered and made primarily among patients, their families, and providers, and affirming freedom of choice in healthcare, including the right to refuse medical care and the right to select a personal provider and a "medical home" team that provides coordinated care with continuity;
- The Center for Medicare and Medicaid Services to be empowered to negotiate prices for medical devices and drugs;

- Health insurance programs, both private and public, to cover all forms of reproductive services and methods that are legal in Washington State, in accord with the principles of reproductive parity;
- Transparency in pricing of health care services and prescription drugs;
- Prompt FDA approval of new treatments based on solid data from reputable clinical trials that demonstrate both safety and effectiveness;
- A strong public health system that promotes conditions leading to better health for the entire population, based on sound scientific principles and following recommendations made by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC);
- The CDC and National Institutes of Health (NIH) to operate autonomously within their mandate, without politically motivated limitations such as the ban on gun-violence research;
- Government education grants and student-debt forgiveness for primary care providers, in exchange for service to underserved populations;
- Expanded funding of basic science and clinical research under the NIH, based on scientific merit, not a political agenda;
- Support of a patient's right to decision-making and other provisions of the Death with Dignity Act;
- Continued funding for HIV/AIDS-related education and care;
- Early intervention and preventive services for behavioral and mental health, continuing through medically appropriate crisis care and community reintegration services;
- Mental health care reform that improves the accessibility and availability of care for all and expands public awareness education and advocacy;
- Full coverage of transgender medical costs, including gender confirmation surgery and all other treatments necessary for a transgender person to fully transition;
- Full implementation of behavioral and mental health parity with complete phase-out of existing exemptions and implementation of regulatory standards and enforcement of mental health parity laws;
- Full funding and implementation of the Washington State Board of Health's rules for health and safety of school environments [WAC 246-366];
- Recognition that gun violence is a public health crisis causing injury and death.
- Improving Medicaid benefits to adequately cover home- and community-based care, and facility care services;
- Improved access to medical marijuana;
- Research into cannabis-based pharmaceuticals.
- Consistent funding of social services programs that include: child care; health education and training; nutrition; medical, behavioral and rehabilitative care; protection and oversight, in order to support: children; parents; people with mental and physical disabilities; the foster care system; the elderly; immigrants and refugees; crisis and emergency victims; those addicted to substances, current and released prisoners, and the re-integration of those groups into society;
- A network of social services that cannot be conditional on faith-based requirements;
- A network of social services that is integrated, culturally competent, linguistically accessible, and based on the needs of the individual, rather than the requirements of the service provider;
- Congress to provide adequate assistance, including but not limited to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, CHIP, earned income tax credit, child tax credit, housing and child care – so children of low-income families can perform at grade level.
- Educational grants for human services providers.
- Comprehensive gun-sale background checks, including criminal, mental health, and domestic violence checks;
- Waiting periods, applicable to gun shows and other transactions;
- Mandatory registration and licensing;
- Raise the age requirement to 21 years of age for the purchase of fire arms;

- Requiring approved safe gun storage;
- Safety training for all gun owners;
- A limit on volume buys of firearms and ammunition by an individual;
- Total ban on assault style weapons and high capacity ammunition magazines larger than 10 rounds;
- Enforcement of criminal negligence laws that hold adults responsible for safeguarding guns around children;
- Concealed carry permits to be valid only in the state of issuance or other states with equal or higher standards;
- The Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to investigate the causes of gun violence.

We Oppose:

- Privatizing or rationing Medicare, or raising the age of Medicare eligibility;
- For-profit medical insurance;
- Direct-to-consumer advertising of prescription drugs and devices;
- Denial of legal medical treatment or prescription purchase based on the personal religious beliefs of medical and/or pharmaceutical personnel;
- “Crisis Pregnancy Centers” and the provision of false medical information to prevent abortions;
- Mergers with religious health care institutions that result in directives restricting their medical staff from providing the full range of health care options, including:
 - o Abortions;
 - o Contraceptive sterilizations;
 - o In vitro fertilization;
 - o Prescribing or dispensing contraceptives and contraceptive devices such as IUDs and diaphragms, emergency contraception, and condoms;
 - o End-of-life decision making.