



2024 Legislative Agenda

Increase Investment in Apple Health Expansion to Meet Demand

Last session, the legislature made important, initial investments to make health care coverage accessible to undocumented immigrants in Washington. However, it is insufficient to meet the needs of uninsured immigrants. This funding was a meaningful first step, but more must be done to ensure that all undocumented residents living below 138% of the federal poverty level are able to receive coverage. Specifically, we ask lawmakers to:

- Secure additional funding for Apple Health Expansion to provide all eligible individuals with access to coverage.

Expand School-Based Health Programs and Services

School-based health centers (SBHCs) provide essential services at over 70 schools across the state, improving access to care and serving the needs of Washington students and their families. The convenience of having medical, dental, and mental health visits at school means students miss less school and parents miss less work. Healthy students learn better, and school-based health care is also a key component to addressing the youth mental health crisis. Specifically, we ask lawmakers to:

- Invest \$3.36 million in the operating budget to expand funding for the Department of Health's SBHC Program.
- Invest \$2 million in the capital budget to fund eight SBHC capital projects in seven districts by three CHCs, one public health agency and once school district.

Continue Capital Investments in Community Dental Clinics

Since 2017, the legislature has invested in 43 community dental clinics that are expanding access to more than 150,000 dental patients. Unfortunately, more than 1.2 million Apple Health enrollees are still expected to go without dental care this year. Low-income individuals and communities of color face disproportionate barriers to dental care and oral health. Capital investments to build capacity at community dental clinics in Washington state will increase equitable opportunities for individuals to access dental care. To continue expanding care in Washington, this year we ask lawmakers to:

- Invest \$452,000 in capital funding in new or expanded oral health facilities at three community health centers. The three projects include: CHC Snohomish (LD 38), Moses Lake CHC (LD 13), Community Health Association of Spokane (LD 3)

2024 JOINT LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: PRESERVE THE HEALTH CARE SAFETY NET

Coverage & Access for Immigrant Communities

Legislative Asks

Washington must expand its health care safety net by making coverage accessible and affordable care for uninsured populations. The legislature must support the work of our health centers by allocating funding to:

1. **Increase number of individuals that can enroll in Apple Health Expansion program.** In 2023, the legislature passed a \$49.9M budget proviso to implement a Medicaid-equivalent program, which will begin July 2024. This funding will only cover a portion of undocumented individuals at or below 138% FPL. Increased funding is essential to allow more individuals to access coverage.
2. **Address gaps in the coverage options for immigrant communities.** There continues to be individuals and families unable to enroll in a coverage due to program constraints and unaffordability of premiums. If the program is not fully funded to enroll all eligible individuals, the state must create a waitlist and expand capacity to effectively communicate constraints with impacted communities. Although the state has implemented new outreach and enrollment strategies to better represent community needs, there are remaining gaps and barriers to enrolling in coverage and receiving care.

Background

- **Washington and health care coverage:** Washington has been a national leader in increasing access to health care coverage. We have an opportunity to build on this progress and cover more Washingtonians by fully funding coverage for individuals who have been ineligible for coverage due to immigration status. Health insurance coverage is proven to increase access to care, improve individual and community health outcomes, incentivize appropriate use of health care resources; and reduce financial strain for individuals, families, and communities.
- **Community health centers and immigrant communities:** Nearly 187,000 of the 1.1 million patients' community health centers serve across the state are uninsured. Many of these patients are undocumented and depend on the clinics to receive care. CHCs are designed to serve all patients, regardless of immigration status and ability to pay. The clinics have a deep rooted, trusted relationship with immigrant communities, often beyond medical care.



School-Based Health Centers

Healthy Kids Learn Better

We request \$3.36 million annually in ongoing funding to increase access to health care in schools by expanding the school-based health center (SBHC) program

The Problem

Our children and youth are in the midst of a mental and behavioral health crisis. School-based health care—alongside the important services provided by school nurses, counselors, social workers and psychologists—is critical to supporting our youth’s physical and behavioral health, particularly for our most underserved students with significant barriers to care in the community.

A school-based health center (SBHC) is a student-focused health center located in or adjacent to a school where students can receive integrated medical, behavioral health, and other healthcare services such as dental care. In 2021, the legislature created the SBHC Program at the Department of Health and established a grant program to provide SBHC planning, start-up and operating grants to interested communities. The legislature also provided funding for SBHC training and technical assistance.

When DOH launched the SBHC grant program, the demand for grants far outstripped the dollars available, and interest in the program has continued to grow. Additional ongoing funding is needed to both continue supporting existing grantees, and also support new SBHC sites in interested communities. The demand for new SBHCs, and the need for sustainable SBHC funding for existing SBHCs, continue to grow significantly statewide.

The Ask

We ask the legislature to provide an additional \$3.36 million in FY2025 for the school-based health center program. This funding request includes ongoing funding for the SBHC grant program to expand and sustain SBHCs, and also funding for training and technical assistance for SBHCs. This strategy is supported in the [2024 recommendations of the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Work Group](#).

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What is a School Based Health Center?

A **school-based health center (SBHC)** is a student-focused health center located in or adjacent to a school where students can receive integrated medical, behavioral health, and other healthcare services such as dental care.

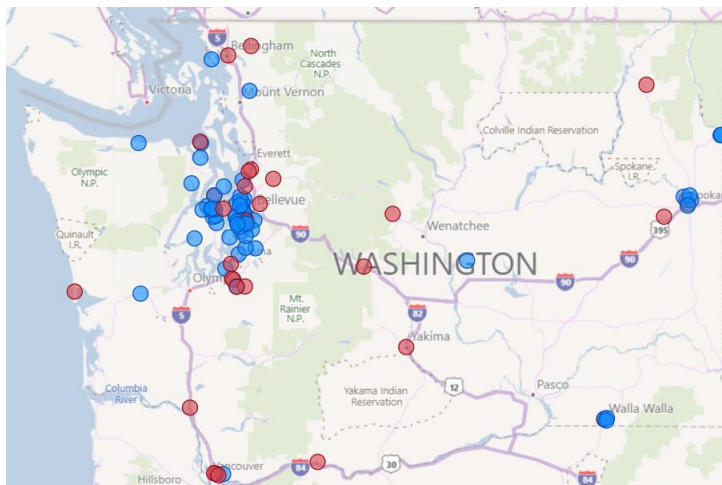
SBHCs reduce barriers to health and learning by providing integrated health care for all children where they already spend much of their time—at school. **SBHCs advance equity** by reaching children and youth who may not be accessing health care elsewhere because of cost, insurance status, transportation, language or cultural barriers or other obstacles to care. **SBHCs work collaboratively** with students, families, school staff and community-based organizations **to serve the whole child**.



Research has shown that SBHCs improve utilization of health care services, health outcomes, attendance, grades, and graduation rates. This in turn improves prospects for lifelong health, educational attainment and economic opportunity.

In Washington we have 30+ years of experience with SBHCs. There are more than 70 SBHC sites, sponsored by more than 25 healthcare agencies, in about 30 school districts—urban and rural—across Washington state. Other communities are currently planning for a SBHC, and interest in SBHCs is increasing rapidly as a way to address the growing needs of children and youth in Washington.

The demand for SBHCs is quickly growing. The map shows where our current SBHCs are located (blue dots) and where the Washington School-Based Health Alliance is aware of communities interested or already planning for a SBHC (red dots).



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2024 JOINT LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: SCHOOL-BASED HEALTH CENTER CAPITAL

Fund School-Based Health Center Capital

Capital Budget Request: \$2.06 million for 8 projects

School-based health centers (SBHCs) provide essential services at over 70 schools across the state. SBHCs conducted more than 12,400 visits in 2022 alone.

SBHCs offer services like sports physicals and well-child visits, behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment and supports, specialty referrals and care coordination, dental care, insurance enrollment assistance, and parent engagement and education.

- Fund eight SBHC capital projects in seven districts.** Expanding state funded school-based health center capital investments will minimize strain on local communities and ensure that seven districts are able to expand access to medical, behavioral, and dental health services.

Organization and School	LD	\$ Request	Type of Project	Patient Care Spaces	Increased Patient Visits
HealthPoint Evergreen High School	34	\$490K	New construction in a dedicated space on Evergreen's campus	2 medical exam rooms 1 behavioral health counseling room 1 multi-purpose room (mobile dental) 1 laboratory 1 provider office Reception area, waiting room	2,681 additional visits, 718 additional patients in first 2 years
HealthPoint Tyee High School	33	\$490K	New construction in a dedicated space on Tyee's campus	2 medical exam rooms 1 behavioral health counseling room 1 multi-purpose room (mobile dental) 1 laboratory 1 provider office Reception area, waiting room	2,300 additional visits, 705 additional patients in first 2 years
Country Doctor CHC Meany Middle School	43	\$80K	Equipment purchases for an existing SBHC	1 dental operatory 1 vaccination storage unit	360 additional visits, 270 additional patients per year
Country Doctor CHC Nova High School	37	\$80K	Equipment purchases for an existing SBHC	1 dental operatory 1 vaccination storage unit	360 additional visits, 270 additional patients per year
CHC of Snohomish County Cascade High School	38	\$244K	Renovation of existing space to build SBHC	1 medical exam room 1 dental space 1 mental health space	3,120 additional visits, 780 additional patients per year
CHC of Snohomish County Everett High School	38	\$244K	Renovation of existing space to build SBHC	1 medical exam room 1 dental space 1 mental health space	
Jefferson County Public Health Blue Heron Middle School, OCEAN Campus	24	\$136K	Remodel, including any demolition or construction, of existing space	1 medical exam room 1 intake room 1 behavioral health counseling room Waiting room	1,776 additional visits, 150-200 additional patients per year
Bellingham Public Schools Options High School	42	\$300K	Remodel of existing space	2 medical exam rooms 1 laboratory 1 private therapy room 1 group therapy room	1,081 additional visits, 388 additional patients per year

2024 JOINT LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: CONTINUE CAPITAL INVESTMENTS IN COMMUNITY DENTAL CLINICS

Three Expanded Dental Facilities

Budget Request: \$452K

2024 Dental Capital Request

Since 2017, the legislature has invested in 43 community health clinics that are expanding access to more than 86,000 patients. Access challenges persist for Washingtonians; therefore, we ask the legislature to continue investing in dental clinic expansions with the following **three projects** across our state.

Community Health Center	Location	LD	Add'l Patients	Request
CHC Snohomish	Everett North	38	1,500	\$300,000
Community Health Association of Spokane	Spokane	3	2,160	\$80,090
Moses Lake Community Health Center	Ephrata	13	300	\$72,100
TOTAL			3,960	\$ 452,190

Background

- **The importance of dental access.** Untreated oral disease has serious consequences on chronic conditions such as diabetes, cardiovascular disease, stroke, pneumonia, and pregnancy complications. Diabetes and heart disease are major risk factors for COVID-19.
- **Disparities and gaps in dental access.** Lower-income people, rural residents and communities of color are more likely to lack access to oral health care. In fiscal year 2021, just 19.8% of Washington's Medicaid-insured adults, and 51.1% of Medicaid-insured kids, received dental care.



Access challenges persist from when Washington cut adult dental coverage in 2011; more than 1.2 million Apple Health enrollees are still expected to go without dental care this year.

- **The Legislature's investment in community health center dental clinics is increasing access and equity.** The Legislature created an ongoing, staffed program run through the Department of Commerce in 2017. Since then, the Legislature has invested in dental capital expansions to serve over 86,000 additional patients at 43 community health clinic sites.



However, increases in population from people moving to Washington and pandemic Medicaid enrollments mean these investments are not keeping up with demand. In order to continue expanding care in Washington, please invest in this package of dental projects.