

**From:** Rep. Steve Bergquist RepSteveBergquist@updates.leg.wa.gov  
**Subject:** Investing in WA's Workforce & Mini Town Hall Invite!  
**Date:** March 9, 2023 at 2:57 PM  
**To:** racorman@comcast.net

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## Welcome to the 2023 Legislative Session & Share Your Priorities!

Dear Friends and Neighbors,

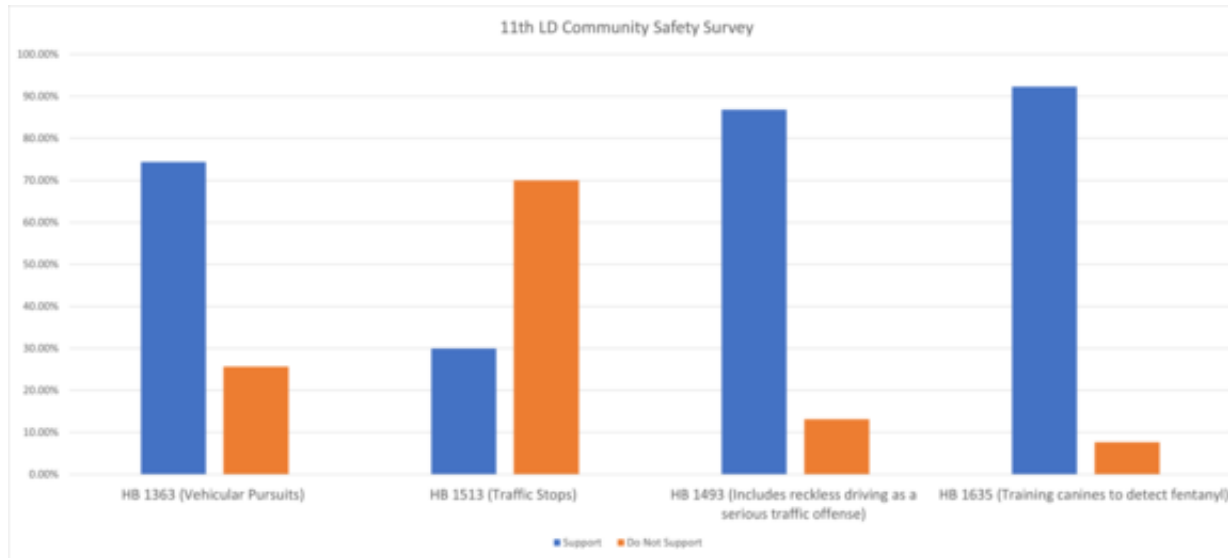
I'm looking forward to seeing many of you at our mini town hall next week. Read on for details and invitation!

We've been very busy on the House floor this week and last week, running bills late into the night to push our priorities forward. I'm honored to share that we passed 328 bills, 60% of which were passed unanimously, and 78% of which were passed with 80 votes or more.

Thank you so much to those of you who responded to our community safety survey in the last E-Newsletter—I really appreciate you taking the time to share what kind of support is the most meaningful to you and your family.

In response to the Supreme Court's *State v. Blake* response, [SB 5467](#) received the highest percentage of votes in support. This bill would encourage substance use treatment in

response to possession and require a jail sentence if individuals do not comply with treatment. The only bill that received a higher percentage of votes in opposition than support was [SB 5624](#), enacting decriminalization of possession and providing support for expansion of substance use disorder treatment programs.



Respondents indicated that greater confidence in law enforcement, more police presence, knowing that people's basic needs are met, removal of institutionally racist practices, and having lots of people out and about are the things that make them feel safest in their communities. People responded that inattentive drivers, car thefts, mass shootings, the presence of homelessness, gun ownership, and drug use make them feel unsafe in their communities.

In response to current legislation, the largest percentage of respondents supported HB 1635, requiring the Criminal Justice Training Commission to develop model standards for the training and certification of canine teams to detect fentanyl. HB 1513, limiting officers' use of traffic stops, received the highest percentage of opposition.

[You can view all results here](#)

Thanks again to those who responded! This week, I'd like to hear some feedback on workforce. Please take a few minutes to [fill out this survey](#).

WORKFORCE. PLEASE TAKE A FEW MINUTES TO [FILL OUT THIS SURVEY.](#)



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## Addressing our workforce shortage

Many employers across the state are grappling with workforce challenges that have been mounting since before the pandemic. These workforce challenges can hamper the state's ability to provide vital services. In some cases—such as psychiatric care and correctional and long-term care facilities—workforce shortages can jeopardize safety for those in the state's care.

Over the last two years, the legislature has worked to pass critical legislation establishing and expanding the Washington College Grant, increasing funding for apprenticeships, and fully funding post-secondary institutions. Yet, critical sectors of the labor market such as healthcare, behavioral health, trades and apprenticeships, and other highly skilled vocations requiring advanced degrees were negatively impacted by closures, staff burnout, and mass retirements.

We've developed a three-pronged approach to address workforce shortages and create future economic resiliency: **streamline**, **pipeline**, and **bottom line**. When there's a shortage of workers, we need to remove unnecessary barriers and **streamline** the ways people can go from training to a good-paying job. Whether it's a student unsure of their options or a worker looking to transition to a new career, we must expand the **pipeline** and give every Washingtonian access to the training that leads to a good-paying job. The **bottom line** is that workers need a fair wage to thrive in Washington state, and we must make those critical investments that keep people from leaving their job or the state in search of better pay.

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## Here are some of the ways the Legislature is investing in workforce:

- We're **streamlining** licensing and certification for in-demand professions by removing barriers of entry into the workforce for prospective candidates and increasing access to applied degrees across the state: [House Bill 1009](#), [House Bill 1030](#), [House Bill 1069](#), and [House Bill 1001](#) will make it easier for military spouses to pursue new employment opportunities, allow regional universities to offer applied doctoral degrees to train the highly skilled workforce of tomorrow, and streamline certification of mental health counselors, speech therapists and audiologists in Washington.
- **We're increasing behavioral health workforce and provider rates** to support a crucial part of the state's mental health workforce that is experiencing an unprecedented demand for these services. We're looking at rate increases for services funded through the state's Apple Health Medicaid program, as well as services that Medicaid does not cover and services for those who do not qualify for federal programs. We're also **investing in supports for state workers in our state hospitals such as increases to direct staffing and violence reduction programs to ensure a safe and healthy environment for patients and staff**

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- Medicaid patients have faced workforce shortages, higher costs due to inflation and supply-chain shortages during the pandemic. **A rate increase will help these providers recruit and retain direct care workers in skilled nursing homes and assisted living settings.** We're also working on adjusting rates for nursing services, specialty dementia care and enhanced services. In skilled nursing facilities, the pandemic led to a lower number of patients and higher costs for staffing and supplies. The state is working on investments to adjust the occupancy threshold for these facilities from 90% to 80% and will annually rebase the costs during the 2023-25 biennium. This rate adjustment will more accurately reflect the higher costs that these facilities incurred during the pandemic. **Rates will also be increased for assisted living, enhanced residential care and adult residential care. This will help providers cover higher employee wage and services costs during the pandemic.**
- [House Bill 1643](#) brings hospitals and the state together to address the nursing shortage through the establishment of a nurse student loan repayment program. Nursing programs can be cost prohibitive for many, and in the wake of a shortage that exacerbated a public health emergency, nurses are needed more than ever.
- Washington's workforce programs play a critical role in educating and training Washingtonians for high-demand careers, and many of these programs serve as the only **pipeline** into specialized fields. However, due to rising costs, maintaining these programs has become increasingly difficult. To mitigate these difficulties and ensure that Washington continues to develop a strong workforce, **we're investing in workforce programs housed at community and technical colleges across the state.**
- As we transition to a clean energy and climate-resilient future, it is essential that we create pathways for workers, young adults and communities to thrive in our new landscape, and **ensure that we have a workforce ready to create Washington's clean future.** [House Bill 1176](#) creates the Washington Climate Corps to enable and empower climate service opportunities for young adults and veterans. It will build on existing service networks to increase equitable access to services, and target service opportunities toward communities disproportionately impacted by pollution.

- The Governor is working on **creating a clean energy technology workforce advisory committee and direct the State Workforce Training and Education Coordinating Board**, working with Commerce and the Employment Security Department, to evaluate the workforce impacts of Washington’s climate policies to help forecast and prepare for clean energy job growth. **The advisory committee will recommend strategies to prevent workforce displacement, support job creation in clean energy technology sectors, and provide support for workforce-related changes to businesses and for adversely impacted workers.**

## Mini Town Hall Invite!

A blue graphic with white text and two portraits. The text reads: "11TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT", "MINI TOWN HALL", "Saturday, March 18 from 1-4 p.m. at Refuel Cafe (401 Olympia Ave NE Ste 102, Renton, WA 98056) with Reps. Steve Bergquist and David Hackney". Below this, it says "To sign up for a time slot, please email syd.locke@leg.wa.gov or call 253-214-3275". There is a small "www.leg.wa.gov" logo in the top right corner. Two portraits of men in suits are shown on the right side.

11TH LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

**MINI TOWN HALL**

Saturday, March 18 from 1-4 p.m. at Refuel Cafe  
(401 Olympia Ave NE Ste 102, Renton, WA 98056)  
with Reps. Steve Bergquist and David Hackney

To sign up for a time slot, please email  
[syd.locke@leg.wa.gov](mailto:syd.locke@leg.wa.gov) or call 253-214-3275

Join my 11th LD seatmate, Representative David Hackney, and I for a Mini Town Hall on **Saturday, March 18<sup>th</sup> from 1-4pm at Refuel Café** (401 Olympia Ave NE Ste 102, Renton, WA). Please email my legislative assistant, Syd, at [Syd.Locke@leg.wa.gov](mailto:Syd.Locke@leg.wa.gov) to sign up for a 15-minute time slot to chat with us between **1pm & 4pm**. **Sign up** to swing by, say hello, and enjoy a coffee on us!

If you'd like to get in touch but can't participate in the Mini Town Hall, please feel free to email

me at [steve.bergquist@leg.wa.gov](mailto:steve.bergquist@leg.wa.gov), or come stop by my office in Olympia. I hope to hear from you soon.

Sincerely,

Rep. Steve Bergquist

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Rep. Steve Bergquist

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**Committees:** [Appropriations](#) (Vice Chair) - [Education](#) - [Rules](#)

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