

SB 5083: Human Services Budget Proposal

WDA and WACDL strongly oppose the investment of millions of dollars to continue the criminalization of mental illness.

- **A “Center for Forensic Excellence” is a Band-Aid for this State’s failure to comprehensively address the biggest barriers to treatment of those with mental health issues.** As of yet, nobody has defined what is meant by a Center for Forensic Excellence. It appears to simply be the same treatment and programming in a better building. WSH lost federal certification both due to the physical plant and lack of appropriate programming.
- **Nearly six years after Judge Marsha Pechman found that Washington State through the Department of Social and Health Services was violating the constitutional rights of class members and well over two years after a settlement was reached to divert people from the legal system, the State has made little progress in remedying the situation.** Rather than truly address the issues and provide adequate community-based services in the forensic and civil arenas, this bill only expands the status quo of placement in a state hospital for criminal allegations.
- **A new \$612 million dollar building is not the answer.** The State can and should make building improvements. Those improvements can be made at a fraction of the cost of building a new hospital. Rather than pour money into a system that is clearly failing, the State should work with stakeholders to invest in programming that will truly help the most vulnerable Washington residents.
- **It is critical that the budget moves forward with a focus upon treatment and long-term housing for those with mental health issues.** More mental health workers are needed to assist in local communities and to engage in early intervention for those who experience decompensation in control of their symptoms. Individuals impacted by mental illness in the criminal legal system will be part of our communities in the future. Investment in a shiny building is not the answer for a long-term solution. The overwhelming majority of those who signed in to provide input on this bill are opposed. The University of Washington, which signed in support, is not a neutral party as they would receive significant funding.

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