

# Washington Community & Technical College Student Association (WACTCSA) 2024 Legislative Agenda

## Housing Costs for Students

The cost of living in Washington State is 15% higher than the national average. The minimum wage in Washington is currently \$15.74 and will increase to \$16.28 on January 1st. This is not enough to live on, considering that it doesn't cover the cheapest rent and ignores utilities, transportation, food, tuition, and textbooks. While the cost of living on campus can be more accessible for students, it is still expensive, especially with the limited hours students can dedicate to working. We hope the legislature can help support rent control, increased financial aid for student housing, increased funding for low-income housing statewide, and support of the following bills: [SB 5666](#), [HB 1124](#), [SB 5016](#), [HB 1149](#), [SB 5202](#).



## Textbook Affordability

Year after year, students report that textbook affordability is a barrier to success. Most students rely on textbooks in order to stay current on content that's being taught by their instructors. Students nationally spend an average of \$1,226 on textbooks and supplies. The high price of textbooks and course materials places an inordinate strain on students' ability to afford school and is an obstacle to success. WACTCSA asks that the legislature consider in-state solutions to the problem, as opposed to textbook company solutions like inclusive access, a textbook sales model that adds the cost of digital course content into students' tuition and fees and keeps the control of educational materials in the hands of publishers and high-cost textbook companies. Solutions could include incentives for publishers to reduce costs or standardize publishing cycles and state funding to incentivize the development of open educational resources (OER).

## Harm Reduction

The opioid epidemic is continuing to take lives in record numbers, leaving no demographic untouched. The most recent reports show 2,432 people died in Washington in 2022 of opioid overdoses, a 17% increase over the previous year. Although there is some great work being done to help reduce harm related to substance usage in our communities, it seems the CTC system has been left out of important conversations around providing access to Naloxone; an opioid reversal medication proven to save the lives of those suffering from an opioid overdose event. We believe the time has come to re-address this issue and include the community and technical college system in this work. Providing access to Naloxone on CTC campuses would help to provide access to a broader audience than other outlets, increasing the overall knowledge level on opioid overdoses and the proper response in our outlying communities.

## Student Pay Equity & Increased Financial Assistance

The cost of living in the state of Washington has significantly increased. Though minimum wage has made an attempt to catch up to these prices, CTC's are not able to provide their student staff with proper compensation. Just as our faculty and staff at our CTC need to be compensated fairly for their work, so do our student employees. If students are unable to balance a livable income with schoolwork, they will not be able to take student positions. Our institutions lose valuable input if only student employees with other means of income can fill leadership positions. WACTCSA urges the state system to adopt a statewide standard of wages for student positions and for the legislature to support [SB 5712](#) to expand the Washington college grant and establish the Washington college promise program.