

# SENATE BILL REPORT

## SB 5321

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As of January 27, 2025

**Title:** An act relating to access at public postsecondary educational institutions to medication abortion.

**Brief Description:** Concerning access at public postsecondary educational institutions to medication abortion.

**Sponsors:** Senators Nobles, Bateman, Chapman, Cleveland, Dhingra, Frame, Harris, Hasegawa, Krishnadasan, Lovelett, Lovick, Orwall, Riccelli, Salomon, Slatter, Stanford, Trudeau, Valdez and Wilson, C..

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:** Higher Education & Workforce Development: 1/27/25.

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Requires public institutions of higher education to offer access to medication abortion through the student health center or through information and referral services to qualified health care organizations, including telehealth organizations.
- Requires public institutions of higher education to maintain a website on reproductive health.

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**SENATE COMMITTEE ON HIGHER EDUCATION & WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT**

**Staff:** Kellee Gunn (786-7429)

**Background:** Public Institutions of Higher Education. Washington has six public baccalaureate institutions, and 34 community and technical colleges.

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*This analysis was prepared by non-partisan legislative staff for the use of legislative members in their deliberations. This analysis is not part of the legislation nor does it constitute a statement of legislative intent.*

Medication Abortion. Medication abortion includes substances used during medical treatment intended to induce the termination of a pregnancy including, but not limited to, mifepristone.

**Summary of Bill:** Access to Medication Abortion. Beginning with the 2026-27 academic year, each student health center at a public institution of higher education must offer access to medication abortion, either through a public program that connects patients in Washington to reproductive health services or through other delivery methods, such as telehealth.

If an institution does not operate a health center, then they must provide information and referral services for medication abortion to students seeking such services. The institution must:

- provide referrals to qualified health care providers who can lawfully administer medication abortion:
  1. Referrals must include the contact information for at least two qualified health care organizations, including telehealth organizations.
- offer private and accessible space on campus for the student to participate in telehealth appointments upon a student's request for telehealth accommodation;
- offer any necessary technical support for students using telehealth services, including reliable internet access; and
- offer electronic devices to access telehealth services.

Website on Reproductive Health Services. All public institutions of higher education must maintain a website which provides certain information on reproductive health services including prenatal care and options for pregnancy termination. The website must provide:

- detailed instructions for scheduling appointments, with contact information for both pregnancy-related services and behavioral health services; and
- links and contact information for campus resources that assist students with requesting academic accommodations, including absences, rescheduling exams, or adjusting other academic requirements due to pregnancy, recovery from medical treatment, or related conditions.

**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Requested on January 18, 2025.

**Creates Committee/Commission/Task Force that includes Legislative members:** No.

**Effective Date:** Ninety days after adjournment of session in which bill is passed.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:** PRO: Washington has long been a leader in protecting and expanding reproductive rights. Everyone should be able to make their own health choices. Students face real barriers to accessing abortion services—such as money,

time, and transportation. When I had my abortion, I was a CTC student who was also working while in school. I had to navigate the health system, find time between classes and take time off work. When I couldn't afford my abortion, the state helped me. The campus health center at UW does not help students going through medication abortions. Medication abortion is common and safe. This bill outlines referral systems for school without health centers to connect students with the care they need. This bill does not exist in a silo. California, Massachusetts, Delaware, and Connecticut all have similar bills guaranteeing this access for students. This bill addresses barriers. As a CTC student, ensuring access to abortion care is incredibly important. At Clark College, 70 percent are first generation students and many are below the poverty line. Without access to this care, students would have to quit school.

CON: At the moment of conception is life. Many biologists are not pro-life. A human is a person in the womb. Babies are dying because of this. Medication abortion is not safe. The human right is a right to life. Requiring a health center to become a killing center is wrong. This makes doctors go against the Hippocratic oath. If you are concerned about unplanned pregnancy, use birth control. College women need better reproductive care. This bill makes assumptions that women can't take care of themselves. The university health system should support college women in other ways.

This is about the health and well-being of college women. This bill does not require an ultrasound. A woman in Georgia died, who was pregnant with twins. She did not double dose when she took the abortion medication and went septic as the uterus did not release. Medication abortion is not safe.

The complications of medication abortion is 4 times higher than with surgical abortion. State funding for these services could lead to a financial burden for the state.

**Persons Testifying:** PRO: Senator T'wina Nobles, Prime Sponsor; Ahna Rader, Advocates for Youth; Emily Cuarenta, Advocates for Youth; Charlie Brenner, Advocates For Youth; Hailey Gray, Advocates For Youth; Sullivan Taylor, Advocates For Youth.

CON: Mary Long, Conservative Ladies of Washington; Jean Hill, Washington State Catholic Conference; Tiffany Blanco, Students for Life SPU; Christina Walden; Chloe Pappazzo, Students for Life (whitworth chapter); Sharon Damoff; Kamili Angel.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** No one.