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CAREGIVERS RALLY



Hundreds of people attended a town hall Feb. 11 at Greenwood Senior Center on the issue of the lack of affordable care for the elderly and disabled Americans and the lack of respect for the people doing the care taking.

Local Event, National Reach

Over 200 caregivers and recipients rally in Seattle on care crisis

Over 200 care givers, care recipients, families and community members met in Seattle Saturday, Feb. 11, in a town-hall style event looking at the lack of affordable quality care options for older Americans and people with disabilities, and the struggle of caregivers for respect, support, and training.

The Seattle meeting was the local launch of a national grassroots campaign to transform America's long-term care

industry, called Caring Across Generations. Seattle's "Care Congress" was the first in the nation and similar events will be taking place in at least 14 other U.S. cities over the next 12 months.

As America's "age wave" begins this year—with one American turning 65 every eight seconds—transforming long-term care will become even more urgent. In Seattle, 3,792 individuals currently receive home care support through DSHS. With 10.3 per-

cent of the Seattle population 65 or older and another 12.1 percent of Seattle residents between the ages of 55 and 65, the amount of people needing home care will only increase in future years.

The campaign, made up of over 70 organizations nationally, aims to protect what we have—Medicaid, Medicare, Social Security—while creating what we need: two million new care giving jobs, training and protection for care providers, new paths to citi-

zenship for immigrant care providers, and measures to make care more affordable for struggling families.

In Washington State, the Caring Across Generations local coalition is led by 23 organizations. The first step is to pass a Seattle city council resolution in support of the values of the campaign. If passed, Seattle would be the first city in the country to pass local legislation around the issue.

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Johns Target of New Law

House passes bills against sex trade, penalizes customers

Thanks to strong bi-partisan collaboration, two measures aimed at reducing the commercial sale of sex in Washington State passed the House unanimously this week.

House Bill 2692 would impose heftier fines on johns convicted of soliciting sex from victims of the sex trade.

"Under current law, anyone convicted of patronizing a person being sold for sex in Washington state must pay a fine amounting to a mere \$150, in addition to any court costs," said Rep. Tina Orwall (D-Des Moines) who authored the bill. "My legislation would increase the severity of the financial repercussions on the johns, with the revenue being put toward helping law enforcement arrest and divert users, and helping these young victims get out of the sex trade industry."

Orwall's bill establishes a \$1,500 for a first offense, \$2,500 for a second offense, and \$5,000 for a third or subsequent offense. These fines may not be reduced, suspended, or waived. The revenue generated by these higher fines would be used to fund "john schools" with programs designed to educate offenders about the negative costs of prostitution.

"Raising the amount of the fines imposed on johns is a small, but significant step to provide more and better services enabling our youth to avoid a life of sexual exploitation," said Orwall.

The funds must also be spent on prevention and rehabilitative services such as mental health and substance abuse counseling, parenting skills training, housing relief, education, vocational training, drop-in centers, and employment counseling to help individuals transition out of the sex trade.

The other measure, House Bill 1983, prime sponsored by Rep. Kevin Parker, would increase the penalties for those convicted of promoting prostitution to \$3,000 for a first offense, \$6,000 for a second offense, and \$10,000 for a third or subse-

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National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day

Community event builds testing options, services for women

Nearly 150 people attended a community celebration at Mount Zion Baptist Church to mark National Black HIV/AIDS Awareness Day on Tuesday, Feb. 7.

As part of the event, community members received free HIV tests and raised funds to support BABES Network, which provides one-on-one peer support, mental health counseling, support groups, and education

for HIV-positive women. The Rev. Dr. Linda Smith from the Church of Mary Magdalene took an HIV test and shared her experience with the audience in an effort to demonstrate how important—and easy—HIV testing is to prevention efforts.

In the U.S., almost half of the people living with HIV are black. In King County, blacks make up six percent of the population, but 17 percent of people living with

HIV. Compared with whites, rates of HIV are twice as high among U.S.-born blacks and five times as high among foreign-born blacks.

Testing is a critical part of HIV prevention. The CDC recommends that everyone age 13-64 who is sexually active should test for HIV at least once. Some people whose

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