

2022 INTERIM REPORT

- Paid Family & Medical Leave
- WA Cares
- *Airport of the Future*



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It's time to launch the *Airport of the Future*

The people of the 33rd District have a love-hate relationship with SeaTac International Airport. It provides hundreds of family-wage jobs and economic growth, but at a high cost in noise and air pollution, with potential public health effects for those living closest to the jet fuel emissions of landings and takeoffs.

But we are at the start of the greatest transformation in flight since the development of the jet engine. Startups and established airlines like United are investing in electric, hybrid and hydrogen fuel planes, as well as sustainable aviation fuel that does not generate petroleum particulates. We will not build another dirty, noisy international airport like SeaTac. We intend to create an environmentally and socially responsible *Airport of the Future*.

Demand for flights into the Puget Sound is projected to more than double by 2050, to more than 100 million passengers per year. SeaTac can't handle that much traffic. With a mere 2,500 acres, it has one of the smallest footprints of any international airport in the country, and there simply is no more space or time to be found.

That's why, in 2019, a bipartisan proposal in the Legislature created the Commercial Aviation Coordinating Commission to find a solution. Rep. Tina Orwall and I both serve on this commission.

Over the last three years, we reviewed airports all around the Puget Sound region but found none willing or able to expand to meet our coming need. Next, a study of possible "greenfield" sites for a new airport resulted in three possibilities: rural areas in central Pierce County, eastern Pierce County, and central Thurston County. We are continuing to search for other potential new sites, with community input.

While much remains to be determined, we know this *Airport of the Future* will be very different from today's commercial service airports. Planning will go into environmentally responsible ground transportation, flight operations and growth. Similar efforts will help us transform SeaTac to make its operations less environmentally harmful too.

As an environmentally responsible engine of growth, this *Airport of the Future* will become a powerful tool to provide good jobs and cutting-edge infrastructure that will spur shared prosperity.

We all want to leave a better state for our children and our children's children. To achieve that better future—one with quieter, cleaner, more convenient aviation—we must envision it now and undertake the hard work to begin building it. It will take decades to build, but we have to decide now for a better future.

How you can get involved with your Legislature

Learn how a bill becomes a law at leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/Overview.aspx.

Find legislation on the issues important to you at app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/.

Watch broadcasts and archived videos of your democracy in action at TVW.org.

Testify before legislative committees remotely or in person at leg.wa.gov/legislature/Pages/Participating.aspx.

Reach out via the Legislative Hotline at 1.800.562.6000.

Contact me directly at Karen.Keiser@leg.wa.gov or (360) 786-7664.

Find me online at SenateDemocrats.wa.gov/Keiser and Facebook.com/SenKarenKeiser.



Dear neighbors,

Since the 2022 legislative session ended in March, I have been listening to constituents' ideas, preparing for next session, and working on the implementation of past laws. In three areas of crucial importance for our state, I am part of teams tasked by the Legislature with solving knotty problems to ensure Washingtonians get the best out of some of the nation-leading programs we have established. In this pamphlet, I'll update you about the work we have done on those three issues:

- Paid Family and Medical Leave
- WA Cares, the nation's first public long-term care insurance program
- The future of commercial aviation in Washington

I am excited to return to Olympia in January after two years of mostly virtual sessions. That means we will again have debate on the Senate floor and in-person testimony in committees. We'll continue the options for written and some virtual committee testimony to keep our work transparent and accessible and to make it easier for people to testify.

Most importantly, I hope you will stay in touch so that I can best represent your issues and concerns in Olympia. In this pamphlet, you'll find a variety of ways you can be part of the legislative process, from start to finish.

Always,



Karen Keiser
Senate President Pro Tempore
Chair, Senate Labor & Commerce Committee



Building on the success of Paid Family and Medical Leave (PFML)

Nothing in the world can substitute for having the ability to spend time bonding with a new baby, or to take care of a sick parent, or to be there for a spouse on active military duty, or to recover from your own serious illness.

That's why I spent more than a decade pushing for a paid family and medical leave program. In 2017, Washington became only the fifth state in the country to enact a comprehensive PFML plan for working people.

And we were the first state to build such a program from scratch.

Ours is one of the most generous and progressive in the nation, offering 12 weeks of paid family or medical leave annually with a cap of 16 weeks combined.

It has served nearly a quarter million Washingtonians since benefits began paying out in January 2020.

This program was a triumph of bipartisan work, bringing together Democrats and Republicans, business and labor.

We never could have predicted that it would launch, in early 2020, into the teeth of the Covid pandemic. Because it is a pay-as-you-go program funded by incoming premiums from workers and employers, when the worst layoffs in memory began, revenues

plummeted. At the same time, a mini baby boom and many more families affected by Covid infections had a greater need than ever for leave. It was a perfect storm to debut a new benefit!

Last session, we had dire warnings of fiscal instability in the program, so between sessions, I have been working on solutions to assure sound fiscal footing and prevent big increases in the premiums that both employers and workers pay to fund the program.

This program has been a lifeline to so many families during the last two years. I intend to cement its future. Whether you are celebrating the joy of welcoming a newborn or helping a relative in a time of need, every Washingtonian deserves to be able to spend those important moments with family.



Listening to Washingtonians about long-term care

Most families lack a plan to pay for long-term care or any sort of insurance to protect them.

As a result, many people are forced to spend down savings to qualify for Medicaid, rely on unpaid family members for basic needs, or sell their homes so they can move into a long-term care setting – even if they don't need that much care.

This broken system bankrupts people and forces families out of their homes.

To fix this, in 2019, the Legislature passed WA Cares, the nation's first public long-term care insurance program.

It's a true social safety net that protects working families.

WA Cares will pay for in-home personal care, professional training and support for paid and unpaid family caregivers, home-delivered meals, wheelchair ramps, and other needs. The \$36,500 benefit covers what someone using long-term care through Medicaid spends on average in Washington for a year of assistance. It will give families the option of "aging in place" rather than moving to an adult family home, assisted living or nursing home.

But as is often the case with a first-of-its-kind program, WA Cares needs some tweaks before it gets up and running.

We heard from constituents about areas where the program design needs improvement, so last year we delayed implementation to get things right. For example, we exempted people who live in Oregon or Idaho but work in Washington, and created other options for near retirees. Then the Long-Term Care Trust Commission, of which I am a member, got to work on other issues.

We also heard from people who want a higher dollar amount of coverage than WA Cares provides. That's why I am preparing a bill for 2023 that will create an option for folks to buy a supplemental policy that uses the WA Cares benefit to cover the deductible, providing several levels of benefits and premiums to choose from.

And we continue to work on the solution to the other major concern that was raised: portability of benefits for workers who pay into the system in Washington but move elsewhere when they retire.