

Answering Tough Questions on I-2124

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They say: I-2124 gives people the choice to opt out, it doesn't repeal the program.

We say: I-2124 is deceptively written to sound reasonable. The truth is the actual impact would be to bankrupt Washington's long term care insurance program, taking away care benefits from nearly 4 million people.

- Every independent expert, including the insurance industry itself, says I-2124 would effectively kill the program, causing an insurance "death spiral."
- I-2124 is effectively a repeal effort - a wolf in sheep's clothing. Washington voters are smart and will figure out that the initiative would have the harmful effect of increasing our costs and decreasing our options when we need long term care.

They say: WA cares is a payroll tax that hurts low income workers.

We say: I-2124 will cost low and middle income families the most, pushing them into more debt.

- Under I-2124, working class families won't be able to afford the expensive premiums of private long term care insurance or pay costs out of pocket. The [vast majority](#) of us have less than \$5,000 in savings to cover emergency expenses, and I-2124 will push more people into debt and signing over their homes to qualify for Medicaid.
- I-2124 especially impacts working women, especially women of color, who most often leave their jobs to care for injured, ill, or aging family members. I-2124 will make things even worse, causing more women to leave their jobs altogether and taking on increased expenses to care for their disabled, sick, or aging loved ones.

They say: 500,000 opted out, WA Cares is unpopular/support is strong for I-2124

We say: I-2124 will directly impact 3.9 million people in Washington. The only ones who would benefit under I-2124 are the super wealthy and big insurance companies.

- Early [polling](#) shows that a majority of voters oppose I-2124, especially once they hear the facts about how it will increase costs and hurt working women.

They say: The benefit is too small, not worth paying into

We say: I-2124 will take away tens of thousands of dollars in care payments from millions of working families.

- I-2124 takes away care funds that start \$36,500 and grow with inflation - to \$60,000 in the next 20 years. Most people have less than \$5,000 in savings, and these funds will go a long way to helping families stay out of debt.
- Under I-2124, a 65 year old retired couple on a fixed income will be forced to choose between paying an average \$5,000 to \$7,000 a year in premiums to private insurance companies or paying out of pocket for care costs.
- According to [The National Council on Aging](#), 80% of households with older adults are in such a financially precarious position that they “would be unable to absorb a financial shock” to pay out of pocket for long term care costs.

They say: Why should all of us be forced to pay for a program only some will use?

We say: The fact is I-2124 will hurt most of us. It’s not a pleasant thought, but at least 70% of workers will utilize Washington’s long term care insurance.

- I-2124 is especially harmful to people with diabetes, cancer, and other pre-existing conditions - about half of us over 50 - because private long term care insurance companies won’t cover them.
- I-2124 will impact people of all ages. In fact, 40% of those needing help are under the age of 65 due to a serious accident, illness or disability.

They say: WA Cares hurts women who stop work to raise children for more than 5 years

We say: The fact is I-2124 impacts women the most. Under I-2124, even more women may be forced to reduce their hours or leave their jobs altogether, taking on increased expenses to support ill, injured, or aging loved ones while lowering lifetime earnings, savings, and retirement benefits.

- The vast majority of mothers return to work within a few years, and 80% of women return to work within 1 year of having a child. Mothers are often sandwiched between caring for children and aging parents and in-laws and I-2124 will impact them the most.
- I-2124 hits women the hardest because it is women who most often leave their jobs to care for family members - there are about 820,000 unpaid caregivers in Washington.
- I-2124 takes away the ability for women to get paid for their time caring for a parent or spouse as a family caregiver, replacing lost income.

They say: This is not the role of government, the private market is better able to provide for long term care insurance

We say: I-2124 will throw us back into the failing private insurance market.

- Private insurance companies increase expensive premiums by 50, 100 or even 300%, routinely delay or deny coverage, charge women up to 70% more than men, and refuse to cover people with pre-existing conditions.
- Only [3% of Americans](#) own long term care insurance policies, because of how expensive they are and because they are unavailable to people with pre-existing conditions like cancer, diabetes, or high blood pressure.

They say: WA Cares was a “rush job” and failure from the beginning

We say: Washington’s long term care benefit program is groundbreaking in addressing the growing crisis facing millions. The program has been strengthened and expanded to cover near retirees and to make the benefits portable so you can keep your benefits even if you move out of state.

- I-2124 will effectively repeal Washington’s long term care insurance program, throwing the baby out with the bathwater. Other programs like Social Security, Medicare, and Medicaid were all subjected to doubts and calls for changes. Today, most of us could never imagine life without them. The same will be true of Washington’s long term care program in the years ahead.
- Washington’s state long term care program deliberations started more than a decade ago in [2014](#), involving hundreds of stakeholders and public hearings. Our state Long Term Services & Support Commission held **27 public comment**

meetings since the passage of the law to gather public input on ways to make Washington's long-term care benefits even more effective.

- One of the most commonly requested changes for the new benefit has been to make it [portable](#), which is now in place thanks to lawmakers. To date, no one has testified against any of the recommendations from the Commission.
- Washington's long term care services and supports are one of the reasons our state is ranked second best for aging in the nation by AARP. Rather than reverse this huge step in the right direction through I-2124, we must protect the program and encourage lawmakers to continue strengthening it as a national model. Fifteen states are considering similar long-term care programs in response to the growing need, including: California, Michigan, Minnesota, and New York, Alaska, Colorado, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Missouri, Montana, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, and Utah.

They say: This is just another tax that hurts Washington businesses

We say: I-2124 will hurt businesses because more workers will be forced to choose between working and caring for loved ones.

- Washington's long term care insurance premiums are paid by workers, not businesses.
- I-2124 will worsen the workforce shortage facing businesses. 1 in 4 people are forced to scale back or quit their jobs in order to care for a loved one today, exacerbating the hiring and staffing crunch that is harming businesses. These unpaid caregivers include business owners themselves, who have to pay others to cover for them if they take time to care for a family member.

They say: If I-2124 passes will workers who opt out be refunded the taxes they paid into the program?

We say: If I-2124 passes, causing the program to collapse by 2027, 3.9 million workers who have been building their long term care insurance benefit since last year will lose the money they have paid into the program.

- The state has determined there will be no refunds for people who opt out. ESD does not have a logistical way to provide such refunds, nor do they have access to current worker addresses or bank info.

They say: It's likely WA Cares premiums are going to be hiked

We say: It is I-2124 that will force premium hikes, by reducing participation in the program, quickly causing Washington's long term care fund to collapse in a "death spiral."

- Actuarial analysis shows the program is on solid ground, solvent through 2098. There is no reason to believe a rate increase will be necessary.

They say: The program's administrative expenses are 25%

We say: That's not true. Total WA Cares revenue in FY24 is projected to be \$1.387 billion and administrative expenses are 2.25% of revenue.