

## **Nora Hendricks**

This summer, I had the opportunity to work at Northwest Health Law Advocates (NoHLA). NoHLA is a small but mighty organization with a mission to work to achieve a health care system in which all Washington residents receive quality, affordable health care. I learned so much during my ten weeks at NoHLA and participated in a wide variety of projects. Prior to law school, I spent two years doing Medicaid benefits work and health policy work at a nonprofit law firm in Tennessee, so it was really interesting to compare and contrast the health policy work that NoHLA does and how they work with legislators to the similar work I did while I was in Tennessee.

One of the projects I worked on was researching and writing a memo related to an Apple Health (Washington Medicaid) expansion that the Washington State legislature approved to go into effect in July 2024. This expansion will provide funding for people who are eligible for Medicaid except for the fact that they are undocumented the ability to enroll in Medicaid. The state approved around \$49 million for this expansion program, but the demand for the program is expected to far outweigh the available funding for it. My research centered around the legality of using a waitlist to track interest in the program, and looked into the legality of different ways of admitting people into the program from a waitlist as spots become available, including first come, first served; need based; or a lottery. NoHLA is waiting for the agencies involved to provide more data regarding how many people will likely be eligible for this new program in the fall, which will help inform future advocacy work.

Another project I helped work on was drafting an amicus brief that has been filed at the Washington State Supreme Court. The facts of the case involve a minor being denied a physician-recommended mental health treatment because her insurance company had a blanket exclusion on that type of treatment. The main argument in the amicus brief was that individuals have a right to bring a breach of contract claim when an insurer goes against protections granted in the Affordable Care Act. For this project, I read through all the previous court filings, helped develop an outline for the brief, and worked on the citations. A number of other organizations also signed onto the amicus brief, and it was exciting and a little bit stressful to be working on getting everything finalized before the filing deadline.

I have also had the opportunity to work on a few smaller projects including researching continuity of care protections in Washington State and doing research to address some legal and ethical questions related to collecting stories from individuals with lived experiences to use for advocacy purposes. I have received excellent supervision throughout my internship, and my supervisor and other staff at NoHLA continuously provided helpful and thoughtful feedback on my work and invited me to some of their meetings to observe some other areas of health policy they are working on. I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work at NoHLA this summer, and I am looking forward to hopefully observe the Supreme Court arguments for the case NoHLA filed the amicus brief for in September!