

Testimony on SB 5153

4/1/2019 Senate Ops Budget in Senate Ways & Means 3:30pm SHR 4

Good afternoon Chair Rolfe and committee, I am Jennifer Flood, parent of three children in the 41st legislative district, here today representing the 130,000 members of the Washington State PTA.

During this legislative session, Washington State PTA parents have testified on dozens of bills that align with our member-adopted legislative priorities to address the health, safety, and well-being of Washington's students, from preschool to their post-secondary paths.

There are several areas of this proposed budget that we strongly support:

- Continued funding for the Social Emotional Learning committee and adoption of the SEL framework
- Funding for 4 days for paraeducator training
- Investments in school safety, enhancing the teacher pipeline, and increased access to early learning and higher education through the state need grant and opportunity scholarship.

However, we have a few concerns:

While we appreciate the increase in funding for Special Education through the increased multiplier and safety net, the amount still falls short of the current funding gap. Parents expect that their students will receive all the services prescribed in their IEPs and lack of funding must not become a barrier to receiving those interventions.

Throughout this session we have testified about the need to fund more non-teaching staff. Psychologists, nurses, social workers, counselors, mental health professionals, and parent involvement coordinators all contribute to the support students need to be successful. We encourage you to make this critical investment and phase it in based on overall district poverty levels.

We know these two priorities are expensive, which is why Washington State PTA adopted a position last fall to support non-regressive revenue to fund these necessary investments. Thank you for your continued support of Washington's 1.1 million students. The Washington State PTA looks forward to working with you as negotiations on the operating budget continue.