

January 10, 2025

To the Honorable Members of the Washington State Legislature:

Washingtonians value high-quality public schools for every child and have repeatedly supported opportunities to advance public education. Yet, our state budgets have failed to keep pace with the cost of providing high-quality public education, and Governor Inslee's proposal does little to fix it. Put simply, this budget falls short.

Even with strong public support and clear priority from the state constitution, the legislature's funding for public schools has fallen behind as student needs rise and inflation has outpaced state resources. Education has been a declining priority as demonstrated by state funding for schools shrinking from over 50 percent in the 2019-21 biennium to less than 42% in the 2025-27 biennial state budget as proposed by Governor Inslee.

Governor Inslee's proposed budget doesn't address student needs nor the ongoing funding gaps our schools face. The proposed budget fails to improve funding for Special Education, for student behavioral health supports, or for the basic staffing and operating costs of schools. Maintenance, supplies, and operating costs (MSOC) have exploded in the last five years with liability insurance increasing more than 100% and utility costs increasing 40%, yet the legislature and the Governor have increased the funding for these costs only nominally.

Budget deficits in K-12 school districts in the last year have forced school closures, increased class sizes, reduced or eliminated course and program offerings, and caused layoffs. Districts have worked tirelessly to balance budgets, using enrichment levies to meet basic education shortfalls and dipping into reserves. With increasing demand and fewer resources, it's becoming less possible and, for some districts, impossible to make ends meet. Governor Inslee's budget proposal continues the path toward school closures and district financial instability. Students will continue to feel the impacts as they experience larger class sizes and lose access to additional learning supports and programs designed to ignite their interest in school.

Given adequate investment, Washington can have a world-class public education system that supports our students and builds a strong economic future for our state. The current pace of funding will not get us there. Washington's students have had to make do with under-resourced schools for too long. It's time to fully fund public education.

Together, we are committed to supporting our public schools, students, and communities. We call on legislators to join us in that commitment by significantly increasing funding for K-12

public education this session and closing funding gaps in critical areas such as special education, MSOC, transportation, and school staffing.

Respectfully submitted,

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

American Federation of Teachers, Washington (AFT-WA)

Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD)

Association of Washington Principals (AWSP)

Eastern Washington Quality Schools Coalition (a coalition of 50 school districts in North Central and Northeastern Washington)

Educational Service District 105, Schools Advocacy Coalition

Public School Employees (PSE)

SEIU 925

Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA)

Washington Education Association (WEA)

Washington State Parent Teacher Association (WA PTA)

Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA)

Bellevue School District

Highline Public Schools

Northshore School District

Seattle Public Schools