

March 27, 2025

Dear Washington State Legislators,

The critical challenges faced by school districts across our state are well-known and extensively communicated. However, the discrepancies in the House and Senate K-12 budget proposals do not reflect a coordinated solution to address this plight. Currently, six school districts are in “binding conditions” (bankruptcy), and another 18 are just one step away from it. What the legislature decides to include for K-12 in this session’s final budget will determine how much bigger this list will grow.

The state constitution clearly mandates that providing a quality education for all children is Washington's paramount duty, but this obligation is not being fulfilled. Most school districts throughout the state have been grappling with budget shortfalls for several years, leading to severe financial distress. As districts look ahead to their 2025-26 budgets, it is evident that they will face even deeper cuts without your intervention. Many have already made substantial reductions, including to their workforce. These cuts create significant operational challenges that threaten the educational experiences and outcomes for our students. They also have long-lasting consequences for the fiscal well-being of our state. Cuts in our public schools impact the state’s economy and unemployment costs.

We need funding to support our students—not merely as a wish, but as a necessity. We cannot rely on local enrichment dollars to pay for state obligations as there is a limit to what local enrichment levy sources can even provide and many have already reached that limit. Forcing districts to use local enrichment dollars to fulfill the state’s obligations creates even greater disparities among districts.

You can save districts from defaulting and improve the educational outcomes of students by:

- Providing funds for materials, supplies, and operating costs as outlined in the original version of this year’s HB 1338.
- Funding special education at the levels specified in the original version of this year’s SB 5263.
- Updating the current transportation funding formula to accurately reflect actual student transportation costs, particularly for special populations, including homeless students under the McKinney-Vento Act, students in foster care, and students with disabilities.
- Maintaining apportionment schedules that enable districts to pay their bills and their employees on time without having to take out a loan from their city or county.

Despite raising these issues in the past, the relief we sought did not materialize. Alarming, even with a projected state surplus of \$1 billion in 2024, the portion of the state budget allocated to K-12 education continued to decline.

The decisions you make about school funding in these next thirty days will impact young people, families, and communities for years to come. We appreciate that you have many consequential decisions to make this legislative session and there is nothing more consequential than our children's future.

Respectfully,

Washington State School Directors' Association (WSSDA)

Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA)

Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP)

Washington Association of School Business Officials (WASBO)

Washington State Parent Teacher Association (WA PTA)

Association of Educational Service Districts (AESD) Network

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

Educational Service District 105 Schools Coalition

Capital Region Educational Service District 113

Education Service District 112

South Sound Superintendents

Spokane Public Schools

Vancouver School District

Evergreen School District

Richland School District