



Date: January 24, 2024

To: Members of the Ways and Means and Appropriations Committees

From: Dr. Kelly Aramaki, Superintendent, Bellevue School District
Dr. Ivan Duran, Superintendent, Highline School District
Dr. Christopher Granger, Superintendent, Blaine School District
Dr. Justin Irish, Superintendent, Anacortes School District
Dr. Jon Holmen, Superintendent, Lake Washington School District
Wyeth Jessee, Superintendent, Shelton School District
Aaron Kombol, Superintendent, Easton School District
Fred Rundle, Superintendent, Mercer Island School District
Brady Smith, Superintendent, Lopez Island School District
Dr. Mary Templeton, Superintendent, Washougal School District
Michael Tolley, Superintendent, Northshore School District
Fred Woods, Superintendent, San Juan Island School District

Our Ask During This Short Legislative Session

As superintendents of school districts across the state of Washington representing urban and rural communities, large and small districts, and everything in between, we are asking the Washington State legislators to take key actions using the tools available right now to help assist districts address the financial cliff that they are currently facing. Those actions include:

- (1) Apply regionalization on the local enrichment levy (HB 2215, SB 5956)**
- (2) Increase LEA funding to \$2250/student**

Financial Insolvency for Districts

Many school districts across the state are moving towards financial crisis. With declining enrollment driven by declining birthrates and other factors; and the end of federal ESSER dollars, increasing the student needs driven by pandemic impacts – all built on a well-intentioned, but flawed McCleary funding model – our districts join a record number of districts across the state that are in financial insolvency, nearing financial insolvency, or on their way to financial insolvency.

Action We Request by the Legislature This Short Session

- (1) Apply Regionalization to the Local Enrichment Levy (HB 2215, SB 5956)**

103 districts receive regionalization in their apportionment to address cost-of-living and would potentially benefit from applying regionalization to the local levy allowable collection. 11 districts (Blaine, Washougal, Easton, Skykomish, Bellevue, Highline, Sumner, North Thurston, Vashon Island, San Juan Island, Lopez Island) have the capacity in their voter approved levies right now to incorporate regionalization, which would inject over \$27M annually into these districts benefiting over 68,000

students with NO impact to the state budget. The other 91 districts, from Shoreline to Spokane, serving over 663,000 kids collectively, have the option to benefit from this if/when they go back to their voters for their next levy, with NO impact to the state budget.

Regionalization of the local levy, fixing what should have already been applied when McCleary was implemented, will give many districts the ability to deal locally with their structural fiscal deficits with no impact to the state budget.

(2) Increase LEA Funding from \$1500/student to \$2250/student

Local Effort Assistance (LEA) is the tool the state has to provide equitable funding to districts that don't have the same ability to raise local levy funds. In 2018, total LEA funding to districts was \$483M which provided equitable supports to 222 districts across the state of Washington. Since 2018, LEA funding has dropped to \$178M supporting only 119 districts. This is a 60% drop in funding, during one of the most challenging times for districts coming out of the pandemic.

Districts who receive or have previously received LEA funding make up a significant number of the districts in or nearing insolvency. We request that the state legislature increase LEA funding to \$2250/student.

Gratitude

We know that you are faced with many challenging budget decisions in the months ahead. As it relates to K-12 Education and supporting our students, we firmly believe that these legislative proposals are some of the best ways to support K-12 Education in this legislative session. Thank you for all that you do for our kids and for your commitment to K-12 Education.

Respectfully,

Dr. Kelly Aramaki, Superintendent
Bellevue School District

Aaron Kombol, Superintendent
Easton School District

Dr. Ivan Duran, Superintendent
Highline School District

Fred Rundle, Superintendent
Mercer Island School District

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