



## Highline Public Schools Board Action Report

DATE: 11.04.25

FROM: Dr. Ivan Duran, Superintendent

LEAD STAFF: Holly Ferguson, Chief Policy & Strategy Officer

CABINET MEMBER: Holly Ferguson

For Introduction: 11.12.25

For Action: 12.03.25

### I. TITLE 2026 Legislative Agenda

Select one: ☐ New Item ☐ Renewed Item ☒ Annual Item ☐ Revised Item

### II. WHY BOARD ACTION IS NECESSARY

It is the Board's responsibility to set our legislative agenda for the upcoming state legislative session. In addition, Policy 1225 contemplates the creation of a legislative agenda to ensure that the district's interests are represented in Olympia.

### III. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

With this agenda we will continue to advocate for the funding and academic supports necessary for our students to be successful. The state's lack of a comprehensive approach to literacy supports means Washington students can lag behind others. Further, the state's inadequate funding system does not provide the constitutionally mandated "ample funding" to meet the state's paramount duty means that districts are falling further behind in their ability to pay the bills. This results in the need to use local levy funds--supposedly reserved for "enrichment" activities--to fund basic education needs such as special education services and materials, supplies, and operating costs.

The 2025 session was extremely disappointing from a K-12 point of view. 2026 is a short session, and therefore not expected to be a big session for new funding, we will continue our advocacy on behalf of our students, staff, and the needs of the community.

### IV. RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the Highline School Board approve the 2026 state legislative agenda.

### V. FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE

Fiscal impact to this action will be N/A.

The revenue source for this motion is N.A. The district does contract with a lobbyist to support our interests in Olympia, for a fee of approximately \$43,000/year, but the act of approving a legislative agenda does not have a fiscal impact. However, if our efforts are successful the district could receive additional revenue, or could see policy changes that will benefit our students and the district. Any fiscal impacts will not be known until after the legislative session ends in the spring.

Expenditure: ☐ One-time ☐ Annual

**VI. APPLICABLE POLICY(S)**

This action is in compliance with the following:  
Policy 1225 School Director Legislative Program

**VII. ALTERNATIVES**

Either do not have a legislative agenda at all, or approve an agenda that differs from this. Neither is recommended; silence does not communicate our interests to the legislature, and a different agenda runs the risk of not being focused on the district's priorities and funding needs.

**VIII. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

Community Engagement Required: ☐ Yes ☒ No

This proposal was drafted after speaking with other districts, our lobbyist, and after reviewing other state level agendas such as WASA and the State Board of Education.

**IX. ATTACHMENTS**

2026 Legislative Agenda For Approval

# Highline Public Schools 2026 Legislative Agenda

## Literacy

***Washington must prioritize comprehensive literacy policies to ensure every child becomes a proficient reader.*** While states like California, Maryland, and Oregon have invested heavily in structured literacy through universal screening, professional learning, coaching, and state-approved curricula, Washington lags behind with only partial measures and no dedicated funding or coaching support. Research shows that early literacy success drives long-term academic achievement, yet Washington lacks a statewide mandate for universal screening, robust teacher preparation aligned to the Science of Reading and sustained professional development. By adopting a comprehensive approach—similar to leading states—Washington can close gaps, strengthen educator capacity, and guarantee equitable access to evidence-based literacy instruction for all students.

## Fully Fund Special Education Services

***We call on the legislature to immediately and fully fund special education services.*** The current funding model forces districts to use basic education dollars to cover special education costs, undermining both programs. This practice violates the constitutional mandate for full funding and must end. Highline Public Schools leads the nation in inclusion, believing that inclusion is not a place, but a practice, and we are committed to fully including all students in our general education program. The legislature must provide the resources necessary to fulfill this promise.

## Address Underfunding of Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC)

***We demand that the legislature increase MSOC allocations to match actual district costs.*** Insurance, food, and fuel expenses have surged, yet per-pupil MSOC rates remain inadequate. The legislature must act to prevent districts from relying on local levies to cover basic operational expenses. Current funding levels do not reflect the actual costs of running a school district, and immediate action is required to close this gap.

## Support Capital Facilities

***We urge the legislature to pass a constitutional amendment lowering the bond validation threshold to a simple majority.*** This action will unlock critical infrastructure projects and reflect community will. We also demand updates to K-12 construction funding formulas to ensure schools meet modern standards and actual costs. These reforms are essential for sustainable, effective education infrastructure and will provide students with learning environments that foster innovation and growth.

## Student Transportation

***We call on the legislature to comprehensively fix the state's transportation program to ensure that it is transparent, predictable, and funded.*** The legislature must restore the transportation “safety net” funding to provide transportation revenue for students who qualify for McKinney-Vento or special education transportation. Moreover, the Student Transportation Allocation Reporting System (STARS) has consistently underfunded pupil transportation costs and must be fixed. This underfunding is particularly detrimental to students experiencing homelessness, students in foster care, and students who receive special education services.