



Highline Public Schools Board Action Report

DATE: October 12, 2026

FROM: Dr. Ivan Duran, Superintendent

LEAD STAFF: Holly Ferguson, Chief Policy & Strategy Officer

CABINET MEMBER: Holly Ferguson, Chief Policy & Strategy Officer

For Introduction: 10.21.26 For Action: 11.18.26

I.TITLE: 2027 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

Article IX of the Washington State Constitution states that funding public K-12 schools is the state's paramount duty. Yet for too long the state has underfunded public education, leaving needs that either get filled through local levies or simply remain unmet.

The district 2027 legislative agenda focuses primarily on those gaps:

- * Full funding for Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOCs)
- * Full funding for special education
- * Growing Transitional Kindergarten (Ready K)
- * Full funding of all Career and Technical Education (CTE) courses
- * Eliminating the structural underfunding of substitute sick days

Secondarily, the legislative agenda asks the legislature to approve moving bond authority to a simple majority, just like local levies. And the agenda calls for an amendment to the Public Records Act (PRA) to allow districts to put responding to requests on hold if the requestor has failed to communicate for at least 30 days. These latter two items would cost the state nothing but would support districts immensely.

This proposed legislative agenda is aligned with neighboring districts, as well as with the WASA and the PSESD's agendas.

The 2027 session begins in January, and like all odd-year sessions is a long (105 day) session. We are hopeful that the K-12 voice will be unified and focused on substantial fixes that will benefit all school districts.

IV. RECOMMENDED MOTION

I move that the School Board of Directors approve the 2027 legislative agenda.

V. FISCAL IMPACT/REVENUE SOURCE

The revenue source for this motion is N/A. Adopting a legislative agenda has no impact; if our agenda is successful,

however, we would expect to see additional revenue, although the amount cannot be calculated until after the legislature acts. The district does contract with a lobbyist to support our efforts; that cost is approximately \$43,000 per year.

Expenditure: ☐ One-time ☐ Annual

VI. APPLICABLE POLICY(S)

Policy 1225 School Director Legislative Program

VII. ALTERNATIVES

The alternative is to 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

To develop this agenda we reviewed legislative agendas from Northshore and Bellevue school districts; the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA); and the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD). In addition we consulted with Human Resources, Early Learning, Business Services, Special Education, and Public Records.

IX. ATTACHMENTS

2027 Legislative Agenda For Approval

HIGHLINE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

2027 LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

OUR PROMISE: Every student in Highline Public Schools is known by **name**, **strength** and **need**, and graduates prepared for the future they choose.

The Highline Promise runs deep in our community. It represents our promise to our students, families, and community to provide the kind of education necessary for our students to become productive, engaged members of this community.

Fulfilling this promise requires support from our families, our community, and, most importantly, the state legislature. As the main source of funding for public schools, the legislature's failure to meet its paramount duty—providing ample funding for public schools—is especially galling.

As we move into the 2027 session, we call on the legislature to recognize the gaps in funding that prior legislatures have left unfilled; gaps that continue to force us to rely on local levies—which the legislature itself has said should only fund "enrichment" activities.

Specifically:

- Ensure that the formula for Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOCs) keep pace with inflation. Costs for food, fuel, and insurance continue to outpace allocations, and with inflation the gap continues to widen.
 - In the last five years, Highline has experienced an 88% increase in insurance premiums.
- Fully fund special education to provide our learners with the services they are entitled to. Special education services are a legal obligation—not a luxury.
 - The 2026-27 special education funding difference between what we receive and what we pay is \$20M.
- Continue to grow Transitional Kindergarten slots. The reduction in seats last session meant that 20 fewer students in Highline received access to high-quality full-day early kindergarten, taught by certificated teachers and fully aligned with K-12 standards and expectations.
 - Early learning should be expanded to ensure that more students arrive at kindergarten ready to learn.

- Ensure every CTE course receives the Career and Technical Education (CTE) enhancement. Currently CTE courses taught to 6th graders and to students in Alternative Learning Experience (ALE) programs do not receive the CTE enhancement, despite being authorized CTE courses taught by CTE-endorsed teachers.
- Fund obligations already imposed upon school districts. Certificated substitutes are by statute entitled to 10 days of paid leave, but we are only funded for four. And while classified substitutes also receive 10 days of paid leave, the legislature provides \$0 in funding—a true unfunded mandate.
 - The shortfall in this area is \$5.7 million annually.

Additional Legislative Priorities

- Approve moving bond approval to a simple majority. This would align with levy approval rates and lower the burden on districts, making it more likely that students will be educated in newer, quality buildings.
- Recognize that public records requests are increasing in frequency and complexity. Districts need protection from abusive records requests that divert staff time and taxpayer dollars.
 - Highline has experienced a six-fold increase in public records requests since 2016, going from 50 to an expected 300 in the 2026 calendar year. In both 2024 and 2025 Highline spent more than \$500,000 responding to public records requests.
 - As a starting point, amend the Public Records Act to allow school districts to put responding to a request on hold if the requestor has failed to communicate about the request for at least 30 days. By allowing holds for non-responsive requestors, staff time would be re-focused on their main responsibilities.