



Washington State PTA Testimony to Appropriations Committee hearing 1/14/08

By Kim Howard

Community Relations, Washington State PTA

253-241-7187

Washington State PTA appreciates the Governor's balanced approach to addressing the needs of all state sectors. We also applaud the governor's support for an increase in K-12 education investment reflected in the 2007-09 biennium budget.

However, we continue to have major concerns about the adequacy of K-12 funding when compared with the weight of demands imposed on this system by both the state and federal governments. The system is stressed to the breaking point, due to 15 years of education reform efforts, with only a slight overall increase in funding. One example of this continuing problem is SSB 5097, passed last session which imposed new requirements for K-12 school safety planning, training, emergency drills and reporting. This bill requires significant levels of additional reporting requirements from districts. It will require additional staff time at both the school and district levels, yet no funding has been provided for implementation. Without additional funding, staff will have to refocus attention away from established priorities, which could have a significant impact on the ability of districts to conduct their ongoing business. I was dismayed to see when I read a Seattle Time article this morning that the press does not understand that this type of bill will require new funding - they put this bill in the category of education-related efforts that do not require new spending. However, PTA parents, many of whom volunteer significant hours both in schools and on district level committees, are well aware of the problems that this will cause.

We also ask both legislators and the governor to closely monitor the work of the Basic Education Finance Task Force to ensure that they have the necessary support to complete their task of reworking the funding formulas this year. Just this Saturday a parent shared with me that her child did not pass the math WASL, but was not put into the remediation class, because his score was "too low". Funds were being focused on those students who were closer to passing. Those in the system are being forced to make unacceptable choices. We simply can't wait any longer for reform proposals, when kids are being held accountable, while the system has not had the capacity to meet the needs of all children.

We thank you again for this opportunity to testify.