



WSPTA acknowledges that Washington state is not adequately graduating students to meet our state's employment needs. By 2020, 70% of all new jobs in Washington state will require some type of higher education, but currently only 31% of high school students obtain a post-secondary credential by age 26.¹

Background

- **There is a skills gap in Washington state - Our education system isn't producing enough qualified candidates for the jobs being created.**
 - ◇ By 2002, 70% of all job openings in Washington are projected to require some post-secondary education, but only 44% of working age residents have an associate degree and only 34% have a bachelor's degree or higher.²
 - ◇ 25% of all 9th graders never graduate high school, and only 31% of high school graduates earn a post-secondary credential within seven years.^{1,2}
 - ◇ Washington ranks 47th in the United States in direct high school to college enrollment.²
- **A post-secondary education is not affordable** for many low- and middle-income students.
 - ◇ Economic barriers limit families' ability to invest in education, student financial aid and work-study are insufficient, making taking on large debt the only solution.³ Washington state has shifted the costs of tuition from the state to students; since 2001, the percentage of higher education costs students must pay has increased from 21% to 48%.^{3,4}
 - ◇ Higher student's costs adversely affect low income students and reduce diversity in our schools. Only 21% of Latinos and 31% of Blacks have post-secondary degrees, compared to 47% for Whites and 57% for Asians.⁴
- **Demand for bachelor degrees exceeds the state's capacity to meeting graduation needs.** Community and technical colleges can help fill this gap, with associate degrees and Career and Technical Education (CTE) certificates. In 2014-15, only 15 colleges offered applied BA/BS degrees and only 1,037 students enrolled – not enough to meet job demands.

Proposed Solutions

- **Start the higher education commitment in high school.**
 - ◇ **Support the College Bound Scholarship Program⁵**, which gives low-income students incentive to stay in school and pursue higher education; expand the program to include eligible 9th and 10th graders whose family's income now meet the requirements.
 - ◇ **Fund the "Launch Year Act"⁶** which encourages all public high schools to maximize a student's 12th grade to earn one year of post-secondary college towards a bachelors or associates degree, or CTE certificate, but was an "unfunded suggestion".
- **Fund post-secondary education, and make it affordable for low- and middle-income students:** Increase funding for **State Need Grants**, which improve re-enrollment and degree completion outcomes for low-income students.⁷

Washington State PTA shall initiate and/or support legislation or policies that helps Washington state to meet its economic need and close the skills gap by increasing access to and affordability of post-secondary education. This includes associate and bachelor degrees, and career and technical degrees/certificates with affordable tuition and local access to all programs while also supporting State Need Grants and College Bound Scholarship programs.

For More Information

Nancy Chamberlain, WSPTA Legislative Director
ptalegdir@wastatepta.org

Marie Sullivan, WSPTA Legislative Consultant
legconsultant@wastatepta.org



Citations

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