

Testimony on EHB 2242 fixes 1/22/18

Good afternoon, Chair Wellman and members of the committee. I am Nancy Chamberlain, Legislative Director for Washington State PTA, and a parent in the Northshore School District. On behalf of our over 133,000 members, I want to thank you for this hearing today.

Amply funding basic education has long been one of our top legislative priorities, and we are appreciative of the strides made during the last session, and the opportunity to give input into these bills. I am going to focus on two three aspects: K-3 compliance and the prototypical schools formula and special education.

Parents fully support reducing K-3 class sizes. But without the physical classrooms, many districts – like mine – will struggle to hit those ratios. We can't build schools fast enough to keep up with the growth, let alone add the approximately 80 classrooms needed to lower class sizes. Tying the funding to meeting the ratios would only lead to even higher class sizes.

We support the approach taken in 6397 and its emphasis on lack of classroom capacity as a determining factor.

We also like the idea of having flexibility to meet the student/teacher ratios, and support the concept in SB 6483 of being able to count other staffing for compliance.

WSPTA believes that student success depends on many factors.

The need for additional staff is real, and it is urgent. There are currently high schools that lack guidance counselors – how can we expect those students to navigate their way to post-secondary success on their own? And while there is strong evidence that students whose families are engaged with school have better outcomes, regardless of income and background, the current allocation for parent involvement coordinators is so small that many districts do not have 1, let alone 1 per school.

Therefore, we support the changes to the prototypical schools formula in 6397, particularly the enhancements to health and social services staff, counselors, and parent involvement coordinators. Respectfully, however, we think the phase in is a little slow, and advocate beginning to phase in these extra school professionals starting in the 2019-21 biennium.

While the 2017 legislature lifted the cap on the percentage of student population that will receive special education funding from the state, under federal law, school districts must serve every student who enrolls in their schools.

Funding gaps between state allocations and school district actual expenses continue to exist, and there are new limits on local levy use.

There are more than 151,000 special ed students statewide, and many PTAs form just to focus on advocating for their needs.

Parents expect their students with special needs to receive necessary services to support their student's capabilities and achieve outcomes of academic success and civic engagement.

Washington State PTA's vision is to make every child's potential a reality. We encourage you to support the increase in the special education allocation multiplier in Senate Bill 6483, Section 4.

Thank you.

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Good afternoon Chair Wellman and Members of the Committee,

I'm Heidi Bennett, speaking on behalf of the WA State PTA, the state's largest and oldest child advocacy organization. I thank you for holding this hearing today. I'm a parent in the Seattle School district and I also volunteer on Seattle's levy committee.

First, on the **HOLD HARMLESS** provisions, it seems that multiple scenarios are needed to cover all levy cycles:

- While SB 6362 expands hold harmless, it's only for 2 school years (2018-19 and 2019-20) and that period is not long enough for districts that run their levies in 2019 or later.
  - o Seattle's next levy is in 2019, and our shortfall in SY2020-21 is \$92 less per student compared to pre 2242 funding, it may continue beyond as well.
- We prefer SB 6397 using "year over year" without any limits but have a concern with using SY 2018-19 as a basis. For districts that run levies in 2018, the SY2018-19 will have higher state but the lower levy amounts which is problematic.

Second, on **Local Enrichment Levies**, we support removing the language to restrict the levies. There are sideboards on how enrichment dollars can be used — so why limit what local voters support?

- On SB 6362 we support changing "lesser" to "**OR**" for the levy amount. But this bill locks school districts into the 2018 levy rate or maximum per pupil limit and does not provide future flexibility.

- While SB 6397 **increases the per pupil rate from \$2500 to \$3000** it is still the “lessor” choice and it only starts with taxes collected in 2019. For districts that have started their 2018 levies using the lower threshold, they will be short-changed and will need to run another levy. While the \$500 threshold increase helps Seattle, it may not be optimal solution for all districts.
- SB 6483 also addresses the levy rate and provides the most flexibility with **greater** choice on the existing levy rates (\$1.50/\$1000 AV or \$2,500/student). But with a Jan 2019 start, districts that run 2018 levies are short-changed or have the expense of running supplemental levies.

Third, on the **High Poverty Learning Assistance Program (LAP)** we want to ensure that we close both the achievement and opportunity gaps and maximize the number of students served.

- We support the rolling averages in SB 6362 or SB 6394 as enrollment fluctuate and we support the graduated funding decrease in SB 6397 for schools that no longer meet the threshold.
- SB 6394 has the optimal provisions – it removes the threshold which really helps close the gaps for all students. Due to budget implications, we support a gradual decrease starting with a 40% threshold until all FRL students are served.
  - o Seattle examples, take Washington Middle School with 43.7% FRL and 478 FRL students (out of 1,090 students) or Olympic View Elementary with 40% FRL and 183 FRL students who don’t qualify with a 50% threshold.

Washington State PTA’s vision is to make every child’s potential a reality. We support those provisions to EHB 2242 that provide districts with more funding and supports to “prepare Washington’s students for career, college and life”.

Thank you,  
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