

## Testimony on HB 1384 Education (House) - HHR A, JLOB - 1/28 @ 1:30pm

Good afternoon, Chair Santos and committee. I am Dr. Nancy Chamberlain, Advocacy Director of the Washington State PTA, the state's oldest and largest child advocacy organization with more than 133,000 members.

We'd like to thank the Legislature for its large investments in the past few years. PTA recognizes there are still opportunity and achievement gaps for our state's low-income students, who graduate 20 percent **below** their non low-income peers.

Our members adopted a position last fall to support legislation that makes strategic investments to close the gaps. One of the targeted approaches is to expand High Poverty LAP by lowering the threshold to the statewide average for the free or reduced lunch program.

**The modified threshold would allow for more schools to qualify for the allocation - effectively driving additional funds to students in need of support.**

**More importantly, a larger number of schools will be able to implement *long-term intervention and student support models*. These *sustained* intervention efforts are inherently more impactful as they allow schools to hire staff and provide high-quality professional development to develop expertise in a specific area.**

Here are two examples from Deer Park School District – outside of Spokane – in schools that hover around the 50% mark every year:

At Deer Park Middle School, High Poverty LAP funds pay for a full-time math and ELA intervention specialist, an integral part of their support plan that now has Deer Park Middle School in the top 1% of middle schools with similar demographics statewide.

Deer Park High School qualified this year for the first time. They have used their HP LAP funds for a specialist to support 9<sup>th</sup>-graders to get them on track to graduate. Their 5-yr grad rate has increased from 78 to 96% in the last few years. Unfortunately, it appears the school may not hit the 50% threshold next year, and this position would be eliminated unless different funding is found.

*These are just 2 examples but lowering the threshold to the FRL state average would provide support to 222 more schools and 50,000 more students.*

Washington State PTA's vision is to make every child's potential a reality. That means doing what works to close the opportunity gap. We strongly encourage you to support House Bill 1384. Thank you.

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Hello again. I am Dr. Nancy Chamberlain representing Washington State PTA.

Washington State PTA advocates for the health, safety, well-being and education of all children. This whole-child approach has led our members to recognize that

non-teaching staff such as nurses, counselors, social workers, psychologists and parent involvement coordinators are critical to supporting the social emotional learning and success of students.

We support increasing the allocations for elementary and middle school counselors in HB 1265, but would also like to see enhancements to the funding ratios in the prototypical schools model for other non-teaching staff positions and to high-needs high schools.

The bill also requires school counselors to spend 80% of their time in direct services to students and directs OSPI to adopt rules consistent with the American School Counselors Association model. We support this concept and encourage inclusion of social emotional learning supports as well as academic guidance.

I have seen the importance of SEL support by elementary counselors in my own school district, Northshore. Even though our overall free and reduced lunch population is low we have several Title I schools. One of our elementaries lost some of its Title funding which it had been using to fund a counselor. Her hours dropped, and she left the building for another one where she could be full time. When she left, the building had a dramatic increase in behavioral issues and a drop in outcomes.

This underscores how important counselors are to the supporting the whole child for success in schools. We support HB 1265, encourage you to increase the ratios for a broader range of supportive staff, and vote it out of committee. Thank you.