

WSPTA President Testimony on HB 1109

House Appropriations **HHR A, JLOB - 1/14/19 @ 3:30pm**

Good afternoon, Chair Ormsby and members of the committee. I am Michelle Nims, President of Washington State PTA. We represent more than 133,000 members statewide.

I am here today to speak in favor of many of the ideas in the Governor's budget proposal and would encourage you to consider including them in your proposed budget later this spring.

First, we'd like to thank the Legislature for its large investments in K-12 funding over the last several biennia. We encourage additional strategic investments to close the opportunity gaps facing out students.

For example, we support increasing access to high-quality preschool programs, support the expansion of ECEAP slots, and the new affordable preschool program included in the Governor's budget.

We also support the investments in career-connected learning, full funding of the State Need Grant, and training for paraeducators.

We support the additional funding for the safety net and encourage the legislature to completely close the special ed funding gap. One change we continue to advocate for is lowering the high-poverty LAP threshold to the state's poverty average rather than the arbitrary 50% currently in statute.

WSPTA agrees with the Governor that school districts should have equitable access to levy funds. Rather than the percentage approach proposed by the Governor, Washington State PTA supports an approach that allows school districts to choose between the current \$1.50 per \$1000 assessed value or \$2500 per student, to – at a minimum – maintain current LEA amounts so that districts' equalization funding doesn't slide backwards, and to – if and when

possible – increase LEA dollars to more equitable levels than the current limit of \$1500/student.

Finally, students deserve both physical and emotional safety, and the allocations for regional school safety centers and behavioral health specialists at the ESDs, as well as enhanced staffing ratios for counselors, nurses, social workers and psychologists to I-1351 levels are investments we strongly support.

We encourage you to consider the strategic investments in student success that are being proposed in HB 1109. Thank you.