

Testimony on SB 5736

2/20/2019 3:30 pm Senate Way & Means JACB SHR 4

Good afternoon, Chair Rolfes and members of the committee. I am Michelle Nims, President of Washington State PTA.

Our vision is for every child to reach their potential, and this includes students with disabilities. We support policies that ensure higher expectations for all students and that students with disabilities are educated in the least restrictive environment.

Senate Bill 5736 increases the special education multiplier from 0.96 to 0.98, resulting in \$41 million in increased funding per biennium.

As parents, we expect that children with disabilities receive all the services prescribed in their IEPs. School districts are reporting a gap of over \$300 million per year in state funding to cover those services. While we appreciate the increase in the multiplier, \$41 million is less than 7% of the reported need. We support completely closing the special education funding gap. If there needs to be a phase-in, we favor starting with schools with the highest percentage of students with special needs.

We encourage the state to bridge the gap in special education funding and help all children reach their potential. Thank you.