



Dear Honorable Senator Murray,

On behalf of Washington State PTA, the state's largest child advocacy association, we strongly encourage you to support the Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction's request for flexibility related to this year's spring assessments.

Washington State PTA is extremely concerned about the educational and mental health of our students, staff, and families. Our member-adopted legislative platform prioritizes the medical and mental health of all pre-kindergarten through 12th grade students, as well as resources for students needing additional supports to meet their academic, physical, and emotional needs.

We can all agree that the COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on students' education, particularly for our most marginalized students, including students from families with low incomes, students with disabilities, students of color, and English learners (who are required to also take the English Language Proficiency Assessment-ELPA). While some students have thrived in this remote environment, the learning loss for many students is significant. Our educators will need the time and financial resources to address these learning losses, as well as critical student mental health concerns.

Some of our Washington students have been back in buildings since September, but many students have been in fully remote or some form of hybrid approach. The Governor has proclaimed that schools must return all students to in-person learning at least 30% of their instructional hours by April 12 for elementary students and by April 19 for secondary students. Expressing concern about lost in-person learning time, and then requiring thousands of in-person learning hours statewide to be focused on state testing is a contradiction that does not serve our students. Under the best of circumstances, state testing causes our students, families, and staff incredible stress. During these unusual times, that stress will be magnified, when our students are already dealing with isolation and other social-emotional issues.

It is crucial to preserve the valuable, but limited, remaining in-person instructional time for students and educators to focus on academic and social-emotional learning, strengthen student-to-student and student-to-teacher relationships, and to try and bring back some sense of normalcy and routine. We agree with our State Superintendent that the proposed assessment plan will "drastically reduce testing burdens on students, families, schools, and school districts across Washington while also fulfilling the need to obtain precise, representative estimates of students' academic proficiency levels."

Please support the Washington Superintendent of Public Instruction's request for flexibility related to this year's spring assessments, which will provide statistically viable data for our educators, while focusing on the educational and social-emotional needs of our students

Sincerely,

Janice Kutzera, WSPTA President and Sherry Rudolph, WSPTA Advocacy Director

