

February 21, 2023

Chair Ormsby, Ranking Member Stokesbary, and Members of the House Appropriations Committee:

We write to request robust professional development funding regarding **SHB 1479**, which restricts how classified and certificated staff in an educational setting may use isolation and various types of restraint as interventions in response to student behavior. Most impactful in the bill is the prohibition of the use of isolation spaces, which are typically used where students exhibit extreme violent behaviors to protect the physical safety of staff and students alike. Elimination of these tools will have significant ramifications for students and staff and will require very thorough, far-reaching staff professional development to prepare for and adjust to the change.

These proposed policy shifts are coming as the frequency and severity of violent behaviors among all grade levels are rising and leading to serious injuries among staff and students, including incidents of self-harm. For instance, a high-needs paraeducator from the Kitsap Peninsula is currently wearing a sling to recover from a dislocated shoulder suffered while supporting a student. A few days earlier he suffered broken ribs in a separate incident. A young teacher has recounted being punched ten times in the face by students in the past two years.

**SHB 1479** includes provisions for significant professional development to help focus on de-escalation and trauma-informed approaches.

In our view, a minimum **\$40 million** investment in this professional development will make or break the success of this bill and must be extended to all staff who interact with students, including principals, assistant principals, bus drivers, cafeteria workers, classroom assistants, paraprofessionals in all settings, certificated classroom instructors and educational staff associates. Successful training on this subject matter will require a dedicated day, with thorough, thoughtful instruction that does not compete with existing state-mandated professional development, and must be conducted in-person.

Fully funding robust professional development with a **\$40 million** appropriation as part of **SHB 1479** is critical to achieving the systemic change this legislation seeks. We must minimize injury and trauma to students and staff, while ensuring that educators have the knowledge and skills to respond to the changing landscape in our schools.

**AFT Washington**

**Association of Washington School Principals (AWSP)**

**CWA Local 37083**

**Public School Employees of Washington (PSE)**

**School Nurse Organization of Washington**

**SEIU 925**

**Teamsters Joint Council**

**Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA)**

**Washington Education Association**

**Washington School Counselor Association**

**Washington Speech-Language-Hearing Association**

**Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO**

**Washington State PTA**