



April 9, 2023

TO: The Honorable Andy Billig, Senate Majority Leader  
The Honorable Laurie Jenkins, Speaker of the House  
The Honorable John Braun, Senate Republican Leader  
The Honorable J.T. Wilcox, House Republican Leader

FROM: Nancy Chamberlain, President  
Lizzy Sebring, Advocacy Director

SUBJECT: Washington State Policy and Budget Priorities, 2023 Legislative Session

The 2023 legislative session has been an exceptionally robust one, filled with a wide range of issues that align with Washington State PTA's 2023 legislative platform. Our wide-ranging priorities support the social, emotional, and academic well-being and success of Washington children who are served through our public early learning programs, into K-12 and through postsecondary pursuits.

As the session starts to wind down, negotiations have begun, and your chambers are passing legislation of interest to the association. We would appreciate your consideration of the following priorities:

#### Special Education

We started this session with a strong focus on closing the gap between what the state funds and what it costs school districts to provide the services students with disabilities need to flourish. Our testimony has been consistent: remove the cap on student enrollment, increase the multipliers to close the gap, and fund professional development to support inclusionary practices and reduce the use of isolation and restraint.

Please support the Senate level of funding, as passed by the Senate in [E2SSB 5311](#); phase out the use of a cap on enrollment as proposed by the House in [SHB 1436](#) as passed the House; and include funding for professional development for inclusionary practices, which supports least restrictive environment for students with disabilities, and targeted training to support reducing the use of isolation and restraint.

#### Address Critical Gaps in Education Funding

In addition to increasing funding for special education, Washington State PTA supports funding for transporting special passengers, as described in both [SSB 5147](#) and [HB 1248](#). The Senate included \$100 million to support this new program and we ask that the final omnibus operating budget include some funding for special passengers. We are hopeful, however, that the Legislature will entertain a broader conversation about fixing the STARS transportation funding formula in future sessions.

As a member of the K-12 Basic Education Compensation Advisory Committee, charged with making recommendations for salary to rebase and compensation adjustments, we were disappointed that the work group's [recommendations](#) to address "experience factor" and to create a different approach to "regionalization" were not considered by the Legislature this session. This is the first year for a rebase, and we

knew that there would be challenges and a very specific need to address problems that have been identified since the average state salary allocation replaced the Salary Allocation Model and removed “staff mix.” Our recommendations included an actual “regional” approach to school districts to account for teacher mobility in metropolitan areas, and to adjust experience factor so it was more predictable and transparent.

At a minimum, we ask the negotiated omnibus operating budget to ensure that no school district loses experience factor or regionalization for the 2023-24 school year. Except for a handful of districts that were scheduled to see a decline in regionalization, this information came as a surprise, particularly when teacher contracts and budgets have been largely set and planned for. PTA members in schools across the state are worried about a perfect storm of lost enrollment, higher assessed values that reduce Local Effort Assistance, and the planned loss of federal dollars linked to the pandemic. Our students have suffered greatly over the past three years, and next school year they need more of our support, not less.

Please maintain current levels of experience factor and regionalization funding for the 2023-24 school year and please support the House level of LEA one-time assistance for the current fiscal year.

### Preventing and Reducing Gun Violence

While many may think of Washington State PTA as an “education only” organization, we are the state’s largest and oldest child advocacy association, with more than 82,000 members statewide. Our members continue to prioritize gun violence prevention as a top legislative issue, and we thank you for the steps both chambers are taking this session by passing: [E2SHB 1143](#), [SHB 1240](#), and [SSB 5078](#), and encourage you to pass [HB 1230](#).

School shootings have become an ever-present danger across our nation. These bills offer a common-sense approach to policies that encourage safe storage and restrict dangerous access to all firearms, mandate safety training, and strictly regulate civilian ownership of firearms. We believe these approaches will make our schools and our communities safer. We are so close this year – please support these four bills and send a message that we value our students, their families, and our communities.

### Building and Maintaining Safer School Facilities

One of our priorities this session has been to fund school safety changes, including improving indoor air quality and other environmental hazards, seismic updates, and an earthquake early warning system in all schools.

We were exceptionally pleased that both the House and Senate 2023-25 capital budgets included \$40 million in seismic safety upgrades and full reappropriation of \$100 million from the 2022 supplemental capital budget.

In addition, we appreciate that both budgets included funding for [Small District and State Tribal Compact Schools Modernization](#) grants at a level of \$100 million. These grants to our state’s small districts typically fund upgraded HVAC systems, replace energy inefficient equipment, or resolve problems that can contribute to a poor learning environment. We encourage you to maintain this level of support.

Finally, we would like to end with our thanks for your continued consideration of parent voice throughout the legislative process and our appreciation for your investments in our education system and advancing policies to strengthen our state. We offer Washington State PTA as a resource as you enter these final weeks and are available to answer your questions or participate in discussions as appropriate. Please contact our legislative consultant, Marie Sullivan, at [marie@mpublicaffairs.com](mailto:marie@mpublicaffairs.com) or 360-870-6911 to arrange a connection.