



November 3, 2025

The Honorable Bob Ferguson
Governor, State of Washington

Via email

Dear Governor Ferguson,

As you may know, the Washington State PTA (WSPTA) is the state's largest and oldest child advocacy organization. With more than 80,000 members, WSPTA focuses on policies and funding that support making every child's potential a reality.

Our public schools are the heart of our communities and the spaces that many people implicitly trust. We encourage you to consider that this difficult budgetary time is actually an opportunity to expand the school's place in community and to strengthen protections and services for Washington families who feel threatened or are the most vulnerable.

For example, as you determine how best to preserve and protect the state's safety net programs endangered by federal actions, our schools – when not offering the services themselves – can act as a hub for community and government partners to provide access to necessary services.

Specifically, as you and your budget and policy team consider priorities for the 2026 legislative session, WSPTA would ask you to support the following:

1. Maintain current school district funding levels despite caseload projections of fewer students being enrolled in our schools and authorize those funds to be used for school operating costs.
 - Declining enrollment leads to less money in apportionment payments to school districts, but fewer students doesn't result in a corresponding drop in the cost to operate our schools and school districts.
 - Schools still need – and parents expect – qualified teachers in classrooms, heat and cooling in the building, electricity to power the lights and broadband to fuel technology, safe school bus routes, and the intervention supports to help every child achieve their potential. That doesn't change with fewer students.
 - In fact, we would argue that as a community hub, a school may be the only place a student who is food or housing insecure or affected by federal health care cuts will be fed, have shelter for 6 to 8 hours a day, offered health services and feel safe.
 - Rather than capturing a decline in enrollment as "savings" to the state bottom line, we urge you to reinvest those dollars back into the K-12 system, specifically supporting OSPI's budget request for Materials, Supplies and Operating Costs (MSOC).
 - Many school district expenses, like insurance and utilities, are outside of their control but are some of the first checks a district must write.
 - The investments made last session fall far short of providing the funding to catch up, let alone providing the dollars districts should be receiving to support student success.
 - We encourage you to embrace OSPI's request and include this funding in your supplemental operating budget rather than sending it to the state General Fund for some other purpose.

2. Protect students and families through Executive Orders and state laws that address federal administration efforts to intimidate and harass immigrants and members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community in our state. We appreciate your stance that Washington will not be bullied by the federal government and encourage you, as the Governor, to take even stronger measures to protect Washington families in the areas around schools and other public spaces where children and families gather. WSPTA recently updated a resolution to designate all education-related areas as “sensitive locations” where immigration enforcement is prohibited, including schools serving our littlest learners to colleges, universities and trade schools, childcare centers, playgrounds and athletic fields, and other school-related event spaces.
3. The effects of HR. 1 have yet to be fully understood, but we’d like you to know that WSPTA supports policies and investments that preserve and protect the state’s safety net programs, including the use of one-time or supplemental funding to address food insecurity, housing, and health care for the state’s most vulnerable populations **until** the federal government reverses this harmful trend.
4. As mentioned above, state funding for MSOC has not kept pace with inflation. With the Climate Commitment Act Auction #11 generating nearly \$300 million, we encourage you to consider how CCA funds could be used to support the utility portion of school district operating costs, costs that have soared in recent years. In addition, clean energy investments in the supplemental capital budget could help school districts reduce future energy costs and lead to health benefits for students and schools.

We know 2026 is not expected to be a better fiscal year than the one completed last April – in fact, we’re bracing for the worst. But the state is not yet covering the full costs of providing a basic education, so we are asking you and lawmakers to keep our districts whole, reinvest any “savings” from declining enrollment back into the system for school district operating costs, and to hold off on new school year requirements for the next few years.

We respectfully ask you to double down on investments and policies that prioritize our public schools and ensure they have the tools and resources they need to fully support our students. This is not the time to try vouchers or other federal ideas that are designed to weaken our public schools and the students they serve. As we mentioned above, public schools are the heart and hub of our neighborhoods and communities across the state. This is the time to strengthen them in as many ways as possible.

WSPTA hopes these comments are helpful as you consider 2026 supplemental budget and policy priorities for the upcoming year. Please let us know if we can provide more details on these issues.

Respectfully,



Tori Emerson, President



Megan Larkin, Advocacy Director

cc: Jenny Choi, Governor’s Office, Senior Policy Advisor – K-12
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