

Protect K-12 in Final Operating Budget

March 2, 2026

Dear Chairs Robinson and Ormsby, Vice Chairs Frame, Gregerson, Macri and Stanford, and Ranking Members Gildon and Couture:

On behalf of the education organizations representing school directors, administrators, business officials, principals, educators, and families across Washington's public schools, we write to express our deep disappointment and frustration with the proposed operating budgets. In light of the improved revenue forecast, it is especially troubling that K-12 programs serving our most vulnerable students face reductions while other areas receive increases.

Cuts to Transition to Kindergarten (TTK) and Local Effort Assistance (LEA) will widen inequities and disproportionately harm students in property poor and rural communities. We urge you to restore funding for TTK and LEA to current levels. If reductions are unavoidable, they should not exceed the House proposed levels.

To preserve TTK where it is working and often the only early learning option available, we ask that you freeze funding at 2024 - 25 levels. If reductions must occur, minimize slot reductions, prioritize existing programs, allow greater eligibility flexibility that reflects community need, and authorize OSPI to redistribute unused slots.

LEA must also be maintained, at a minimum at the House enhancement level, to uphold the Legislature's 2025 commitment to equalize levy capacity across communities. Reducing LEA now would retreat from that promise and deepen disparities between districts with differing local levy capacity.

On pupil transportation, many districts have already committed to bus purchases based on the current depreciation schedule and associated state funding. If a new depreciation schedule is needed, it should grandfather buses already ordered or under contract and acknowledge that smaller buses are currently replaced on an eight-year schedule, not 13.

In addition, the House proposed elimination from the depreciation schedule the amount of federal grants or rebates for EV buses breaks trust with districts that have made significant commitments to replace diesel bus fleets with zero emission buses. Please do not accept this policy change or apply it to future purchases so that districts can plan accordingly.

Finally, please continue to fully fund any new district mandates, preserve MSOC funding at inflationary adjusted levels, and support statewide requirements such as the High School and Beyond Plan with state dollars.

The decisions before you will either uphold or erode Washington's constitutional promise to its students now. We urge you to choose equity, stability, and opportunity.

Sincerely,



Nine ESDs. One Network.
Supporting Washington's Schools and Communities.



Cc: Washington State House of Representatives
Washington State Senate