Washington State PTA
everychild. onevoice.

November 16, 2026

The Honorable Bob Ferguson
Governor, State of Washington

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 the policies and funding that make every child's potential a reality.

WSPTA's platform this session asks the state to do three things — **preserve what works, protect what matters, and imagine what's possible** — and the budget **you** propose is where that begins. We know from conversations with legislators last session that they view your budget as a starting point, and when you propose cuts to programs that help children prepare for kindergarten or support current K-12 students, legislators will take that and go deeper.

For 2027, we encourage you to treat a tight budget as an opportunity rather than a constraint: the state's paramount duty to amply fund basic education does not change because revenue is short. We share the concerns raised by many: the state has still not funded the true costs of operating our schools, district budgets continue to erode as costs outpace what the state provides, and 11 districts are now operating under binding conditions. You have the opportunity to put our children first and resist the urge to make further cuts in K-12 that only make it tougher for our students to learn and achieve.

We recognize that FY28 will be challenging. However, we support OSPI's request for roughly $1.2 billion over the biennium to begin closing that gap between what it costs and what the state funds, and believe it is an honest assessment of what it will take to put K-12 funding back on track. Washington's budget challenges are real, but the answer cannot be to balance the budget on the backs of our students, teachers and schools.

In addition to proposing no additional cuts to K-12 education program or giving in to one-time budgeting gimmicks, as you and your budget and policy team finalize the 2027–29 budget, WSPTA asks you to support the following investments:

Fully fund Materials, Supplies, and Operating Costs (MSOC), beginning with the utility and insurance costs districts cannot control. Insurance premiums and utility bills are outside a district's control and are among the first checks it must write. Both costs have soared in recent years. MSOC has not kept pace with inflation, so every dollar of that gap is pulled from classrooms, staff, and student services. We urge you to fund OSPI's MSOC request in your operating budget rather than treating a decline in enrollment as "savings" to the state's bottom line. Fewer students does not lower the cost of heating and insuring a building.

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Invest Climate Commitment Act revenue in modernizing school facilities. WSPTA members adopted a legislative priority calling for Climate Commitment Act (CCA) funds to modernize K–12 heating, ventilation, filtration, and cooling systems. These investments pay for themselves twice over: they reduce the utility costs that drive the MSOC gap above, and they protect students' health and learning during wildfire smoke and extreme heat, while helping districts meet the state's Clean Buildings Performance Standards. We encourage you to direct CCA revenue and clean-energy capital funding toward HVAC modernization in the schools that need it most.

These funding questions do not stand alone. Our platform asks the state to protect every student's safety and supports — by fully funding special education, addressing the student mental health crisis, and keeping students safer from gun violence — and to imagine what Washington can build by ensuring every student reaches grade-level literacy and math. Parents recognize that special education, the Learning Assistance Program, and the Transitional Bilingual Instruction Program are among the most underfunded obligations the state carries. When the state underfunds the programs that keep students learning, healthy, and safe, it is not saving money — it is harming children today and robbing Washington of the educated, healthy, capable adults our future depends on. We ask you to carry these investments forward as you set budget and policy priorities for the biennium.

Throughout our priorities, WSPTA stands for public schools that are safe and welcoming to every student, and especially to those who are most vulnerable. We ask you to keep our schools places where all children and families feel protected and to double down on investments and policies that prioritize our public schools, ensuring they have the tools and resources to support each and every student's success.

Finally, we'd like to share a caution. This is not the time to try vouchers or support other federal ideas designed to weaken our public schools and the students they serve just because other blue states might be doing it. Public schools are the hearts and hubs of our communities across Washington, and this is the biennium to strengthen them.

WSPTA hopes these comments are helpful as you put the finishing touches on the 2027–29 budget and set policy priorities for the session ahead. Please let us know if we can provide more detail on any of these issues.

Respectfully,

Tori Emerson, President

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