

2019 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

IMPROVE SCHOOL SAFETY AND SECURITY

School districts need to support their students and staff before—and after—a crisis occurs and providing sufficient nurses, mental and behavioral health counselors, and school security is an effective strategy. Unfortunately, current funding does not provide sufficient staffing support for schools. WASA urges the Legislature to enhance staff allocations, with a priority of providing additional staff in the categories of Health and Social Services (including school nurses and mental health counselors), Guidance Counselors, and Student and Staff Security. The Legislature is strongly encouraged to invest in the state's nine Educational Service Districts to create and support comprehensive Regional Safety Centers.

WASA believes that the commitment of resources to the education and welfare of the children of Washington State is an investment in the quality of our future.

We believe that effective school leaders initiate and manage change resulting in a system of K–12 education in which all students receive a quality education.

PROVIDE EQUITABLE EDUCATION INVESTMENTS

The Legislature has provided significant increases in K–12 education funding to comply with the constitutional paramount duty. The additional investments in basic education provided to implement EHB 2242 (2017) and E2SSB 6362 (2018) are appreciated; however, the Legislature must provide consistent and equitable resources to all school districts that will positively impact opportunities and learning of all K–12 children. Portions of the new education funding structure continue to need revisions, including:

- **Special Education.** The 2018 Legislature increased the special education excess cost multiplier, which increased per student funding; however, the increase was minimal. Special education continues to be underfunded, forcing many districts to use limited—and decreasing—local levy funds to backfill the state's funding gap.
- **Levies and Local Effort Assistance.** Inequities between districts were exacerbated by capping levy authority of property rich districts at a higher level than neighboring property poor districts—while diminishing levy capacity for all districts at the same time. While legislators stated their intent to “reform” levy/LEA policies in 2018, no action was taken.
- **Salary Allocations and State Schedule.** The new education funding model eliminated the state Salary Allocation Model and instituted a new one-size-fits-all statewide average salary allocation, while also eliminating the staff mix factor. The 2018 Legislature reconsidered the decision to eliminate staff mix and instituted a new Experience Factor. Assisting less than 60 districts, however, the adjustment is not as broad-based as desired or needed. Another compensation consideration is health benefits; as the new School Employees' Benefits Board is implemented, the Legislature must ensure school employee health benefit costs for all covered employees are borne by the state, preventing unfunded mandates on school districts.
- **Regionalization.** Legislators generally understood EHB 2242's regionalization plan forced inequities and would likely pit districts against one another; however, the final “correction” adopted in 2018 only assisted six districts. Regionalization methodology and application of regionalization factors must continue to be evaluated and corrected.

SUPPORT SCHOOL FACILITIES

WASA urges the Legislature to: advance a constitutional amendment to the people authorizing school district bond issues to be approved with a simple majority vote; enhance the State's investment in K–12 construction by updating the current, outdated funding formulas for the Construction Cost Allowance and Student Space Allocation to ensure funding more closely reflects actual construction costs and educational space needs; provide school districts that have difficulty passing local bonds with capital funds to support necessary new construction or modernization; and invest in safety-related school facility costs.

EXPAND AVAILABLE STATE RESOURCES

The current state budget structure cannot accommodate both stable and ample basic education funding and sufficient resources for other vital state programs. WASA supports expanded state resources or a restructured tax system to ensure ample, sustainable, and equitable revenues to enable the Legislature to support K–12 education and also prevent drastic reductions of other necessary government services—which would have significant impacts on K–12 education.

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