



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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State Budgets Fall Short Again on Funding Special Education

House, Senate budgets continue to fail state's special education students

OLYMPIA — Washington school administrators again expressed concern that state operating budget proposals are insufficient to meet the needs of the state's special education students, and that legislators must address this imbalance before they conclude their work this session.

"Special education is a state and federal obligation, as well as a moral imperative," said Joel Aune, executive director of the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA).

"For years, we have heard from educators, parents—even legislators themselves—that Washington State is not meeting the needs of our special education students. Today's Senate budget, and the previously released House budget, does very little to address that concern," said Aune.

"Right now, we have 295 school districts running in the red when it comes to special education," he added. "The reality is, every dollar the Legislature provides for special education frees up a levy dollar that can be used for local priorities, services, programming and expanded opportunities for kids."

In a February 2019 investigation by KING 5 news, state budget writers promised "significant" increases in special education funding this year. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction has estimated that special education is being underfunded up to \$400 million per year.

Friday's budget proposal unveiled by the Senate Democrats would provide \$86 million for special education, which slightly above \$72 million proposed earlier this month by House Democrats. Both proposals still fall far short of what school districts need, Aune noted.

“By OSPI’s own estimates, lawmakers need to provide between \$300 and \$400 million a year for special education. These budget proposals should have provided a sizable boost to districts for special education and it’s clear they have fallen considerably short,” added Aune. “Districts are doing their best to meet the needs of every student. Given all of the changes to school funding and levies, coupled with the continued shortage of special education funds, administrators are really up against an enormous fiscal challenge.

“Our members are asking lawmakers to make this a priority and adequately address special education funding before they adjourn.”

About the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA)

WASA (www.wasa-oly.org) is a non-profit organization committed to the development of quality education through professional leadership. Members benefit from a supportive community of professional leaders working to provide insightful, valuable training support, and resources. WASA also strives to sustain a positive impact on legislative and community leaders. Membership is open to education administrators in Washington state.

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