

School administrators recognize and appreciate the Legislature's efforts to address K–12 education concerns in the 2021–23 biennium. While K–12 budgets were largely protected with enrollment and pupil transportation stabilization payments and major investments were finally made to begin needed updates of staffing ratios in the Prototypical School Funding Model, many of our school districts' most critical needs were passed over. During the 2023 Legislative Session, as a new two-year budget is adopted, it is urgent that K–12 education's ongoing concerns are addressed.

School administrators are committed to ensuring each and every student is provided with equitable learning environments where they can learn and achieve their educational goals and aspirations. In pursuit of this commitment, WASA urges the Legislature to positively act upon the following priorities:

### **Advance Equity**

Closing opportunity gaps to promote high levels of achievement for all students is critical. WASA urges the Legislature to provide school districts the resources, tools, and flexibility to: ensure fair treatment, equitable access, and opportunity for each student to achieve successful outcomes; and recruit, support, and retain effective district and building staff who reflect the diversity of our student populations, including ethnicity and gender.

### **Support Basic Education Compensation Rebase**

Current law (adopted in 2017's EHB 2242) requires the Legislature, beginning in 2023, to regularly review and rebase minimum salaries, including regionalization and experience factors, to ensure salary allocations continue to align with staffing costs for the state's program of basic education. As the compensation system is being rebased, WASA urges: the calculation and application of regionalization factors to be adjusted using school districts' labor markets, rather than cost of housing alone; the calculation and application of experience factors to be adjusted making the system more transparent and equitable; the previous calendar year's annual average Seattle-area CPI to be used as an inflationary factor, as adopted by I-732; and the development and implementation of multiple educator pathways and incentives to ensure sufficient and diverse staff are available to districts.

### **Fully Fund Special Education**

In the last four years, the Legislature has: increased the special education excess cost multiplier (2019); provided additional funding for safety net awards (2020); and provided funding for additional transition services, for professional development, and for family liaisons (2021). While these incremental steps to reduce the special education funding gap are positive and appreciated, the 2023 Legislature must take more deliberate action to provide full funding of special education costs and align funding with best practices.

### **Fix Pupil Transportation**

Under STARS, the current Pupil Transportation funding model, many districts experience significant funding gaps; in the last five years, many districts received an allocation below their costs. OFM recently found in most situations, the STARS model is not going to provide adequate resources to school districts and recommends, at the very least, that more funding be provided to the system. We appreciate the 2022 Legislature's provision of additional funding to address excess costs to transport special passengers; however, it is time to comprehensively fix the pupil transportation formula to ensure it is more transparent, predictable, and adequately funded.

### **Update Staffing Allocations**

We applaud the 2022 Legislature for beginning a phase-in of enhanced staff allocations, specifically investing in staff to meet students' needs for social, emotional, safety, and behavioral health. This action implements a portion of the Phase I recommendations of the Staffing Enrichment Workgroup (2019). We urge the 2023 Legislature to continue the implementation of the Phase I recommendations by: improving Prototypical School Funding Model (PSFM) levels for school principals to promote school cultures of learning and growth, support students by regularly meeting social-emotional and mental health needs, and address increased responsibilities in supervisory duties of their staff members; providing additional professional development to close achievement gaps; and adding continuous improvement coaches as an enhancement to the PSFM.

### **Invest in Learning Recovery**

The COVID-19 pandemic forced the long-term use of remote learning, which has been detrimental to many students. The 2021 Legislature recognized this, providing significant investments to support learning recovery and acceleration. Unfortunately, most of those programs are supported with one-time funds. Additional, ongoing resources are needed to expand accelerated learning opportunities for tutoring, additional instructional time, and to offer more student supports to address long-term impacts from the pandemic.

### **Support Capital Facilities**

WASA urges the Legislature to: give Washington's citizens the opportunity to decide whether school district bond issues should be approved with a simple majority vote; and 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.

# WASA EQUITY STATEMENT

LEADERSHIP | TRUST | ADVOCACY

**Aligned with its mission and beliefs,** WASA is committed to leading, serving, and supporting current and aspiring leaders to create systems and equitable learning environments where each and every student can learn and achieve their educational goals and aspirations.

**Grounded in the following definitions,** Educational Equity is embraced as the potent combination of:

**Cultural Competency:** the knowledge of student cultural histories and contexts, as well as family norms and values in different cultures; knowledge and skills in accessing community resources and community and parent outreach; and skills in adapting instruction to students' experiences and identifying cultural contexts for individual students.

**Diversity:** the range of human differences within a given setting, collective, or group based on multiple factors, including but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, disability status, age, educational status, religion, geography, primary language, culture, and other characteristics, beliefs, and experiences.

**Equity:** the condition that would be achieved if one's group membership, no longer predicted, in a statistical sense, how one fares. Equity is the outcome, not just access to opportunity.

**Inclusion:** the intentional actions that create and sustain belonging, safety, respect, and attention to individual needs and backgrounds to ensure all students fully engage in available activities and opportunities.

**Therefore,** WASA believes that Educational Equity, for each and every student, will be attained when barriers are removed throughout the system, ensuring equal access and opportunity for students to achieve successful outcomes. WASA will commit to providing vision, leadership, and support to district leaders as they take action to eradicate gaps that are a result of systemic inequities in our schools.

**This statement** will inform WASA's decision-making and future actions as it exerts its voice and influence in the areas of leadership, trust, and advocacy.