

A LETTER FROM THE CRADLE THROUGH COLLEGE COALITION**To: The Honorable Andy Hill and The Honorable Ross Hunter****CC: The Honorable Frank Chopp, The Honorable Mark Schoesler, The Honorable Pat Sullivan, The Honorable Reuven Carlyle, The Honorable J.T. Wilcox, The Honorable Dan Kristiansen, The Honorable John Braun****Dear Senator Hill and Representative Hunter,**

Thank you both for your hard work thus far in the session to meet the State's *McCleary* obligation and also invest in education across the continuum. You are on the cusp of passing the most important investments in students our State has seen in generations. It is truly a historic time and we will need your leadership down the final stretch more than ever.

As the special session convenes, the statewide Cradle Through College Coalition urges you to include the following five priorities in the final 2015-2017 operating budget:

1. Fully fund the State Need Grant

Last year 33,500 low-income students qualified for state financial aid but did not receive a grant because funds were no longer available. College access for low-income students must be prioritized. It is imperative to maintain strong support for the College Bound Scholarship and to fully fund the State Need Grant to meet demand.

2. Pass the Early Start Act with a 12-month authorization for Working Connections Child Care

The Early Start Act must be passed with adequate funding and include a 12-month Working Connections Child Care authorization to ensure children have access to a full year of quality care, with no changes in family circumstances triggering de-enrollment during that period. This promotes continuity of care for children and stable funding for providers, both of which contribute to the quality of care experienced by the child.

3. Make *McCleary* Work

The state is making historic investments in K-12 education, but it is critical these investments be accountable for delivering results and that it encourage innovation. Most importantly, new money must be spent in ways that will directly help students and close opportunity gaps. Four ways the final budget can support gap closing and accountability are:

a. Increase the State Board of Education/OSPI school turnaround program to \$20 million per biennium – This program helps very low performing schools receive support to implement robust improvement strategies. For example, *Lakeridge Elementary in Renton* – a recipient of turnaround assistance – went from being one of the lowest performing schools in the State to performing as well as, or better than, state averages. This is an example of a strategic investment in K-12 system accountability.

b. Fund College in the High School – These programs allow students to earn college credits while still in high school, which enhances career readiness. Funding College in the High School, along with Running Start, will expand the availability of these programs and shift the cost burden away from students.

c. Increase funding and maximize the impact of the Learning Assistance Program (LAP) – Last session the Legislature added \$143 million to the State's investment in LAP, bringing the total state investment to \$450 million. These flexible, basic education dollars – which are meant to close opportunity gaps – must be very well spent. The State OSPI should make every effort to showcase the best examples of innovative uses of LAP and provide communities with technical assistance on effective practices. Accountability for results for students most in need must drive each investment decision.

d. Fund dual language grants at \$1 million per biennium – Expand programs that promote two-way language immersion in classrooms, especially in elementary schools. Dual-language programs strengthen parent engagement and are a proven method for increasing achievement for both English Language Learners and native English speakers.

4. End the overreliance on local levies

In 2013, districts with local levies brought in more than \$2 billion to pay for elements of basic education, including teacher salaries. It is the state's constitutional obligation to fund basic education with tax dollars collected by the state, not local school districts. This was a central point in the state Supreme Court's *McCleary* decision, and it must be dealt with in the final budget deal. Levy reform is a critical step in addressing funding inequities under the current system, which is inequitable, unconstitutional and opaque.

5. Invest in higher education operating costs

The legislature is making a strong commitment to support higher education institutions in this budget, and those efforts are laudable. However, two- and four-year institutions will continue to face challenges if tuition is lowered or held steady without backfilling the operating costs necessary to serve students.

The above budget priorities align with the Cradle Through College Coalition's core principles. A summary of the core principles can be found below, with the full statement available on the website: www.c2cCoalition.org.

1. State investments must be made cradle through college
2. Strong accountability for results
3. Encourage innovation and spread of best practices
4. Additional funding is needed

Thank you for your continued efforts on this budget. By including these priorities in the final 2015-2017 operating budget, we can build on the historic investments being made in education by advancing equity, closing opportunity gaps and improving outcomes for all of Washington's children.

Sincerely,

Cradle Through College Coalition Steering Committee

Equity in Education Coalition
League of Education Voters
OneAmerica
Road Map Project
Rural Alliance for College Success

Signed by:

Steering Committee
Equity in Education Coalition
League of Education Voters
OneAmerica
Road Map Project
Rural Alliance for College Success

Educational Institutions
Auburn School District
Bellevue College
Big Bend Community College
Green River Community College
Highline Public Schools
Kent School District
Lake Washington Institute of Technology
Puget Sound Educational Service District
Renton School District
Renton Technical College
Seattle Colleges (South, North and Central Colleges)
Tukwila School District
University of Washington
Washington State University
Western Washington University

Coalitions
Eastside Pathways
Graduate Tacoma!
Puget Sound Coalition for College and Career Readiness
Southeast Seattle Education Coalition
Tacoma-Pierce County Growth Partnership
Youth Development Executives of King County

Organizations
Bamford Foundation
Big Brothers Big Sisters of Puget Sound
Boys & Girls Club of Bellevue
CARE Center
Center for Strong Schools at University of Washington – Tacoma
Child Care Action Council
Child Care Resources
Children's Alliance
City of Kenmore
College Access Now
College Success Foundation
Communities in Schools of Federal Way
Communities in Schools of Kent
Communities in Schools of Renton
Communities in Schools of Seattle
Democrats for Education Reform
Jobs for Washington's Graduates Foundation
Jumpstart at University of Washington
Kent Youth and Family Services
King County Housing Authority
Latin Americans United for Education
Morning Star Cultural Center
Morris Family Foundation
Nesholm Family Foundation
Northwest Venture Philanthropy
Office of King County Executive Dow Constantine
Participatory Research Consulting
Partners for Our Children
Raja for Africa
Reach Out and Read Washington State
Refugee Women's Alliance
Renton Youth Advocacy Center
The Seattle Foundation
Seattle Housing Authority
Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
Service Learning Seattle
School's Out Washington
Smarter Learning Group
SOAR
Sound Discipline
Southwest Youth and Family Services
Stand for Children
Statewide Poverty Action Network
STEM Paths Innovation Network
Teachers United
Technology Access Foundation
Thrive Washington
Treehouse
United Way of King County
United Way of Snohomish County
White Center Community Development Association
Year Up
YMCA of Greater Seattle
YWCA Seattle | King | Snohomish

Individuals
Alan Sutliff – Parent
Alfred Frates – Parent
Allen McKenzie – Attorney/Teacher
Allison Shields
Amy Liu
Anita Koyier-Mwamba – School Family Partnerships Coordinator, Seattle Public Schools
Brooke Densmore Williams – Community Advocate
Carlina Brown-Banks – Parent Engagement Coordinator
Carol Lewis
Cheryl Lydon – STEM Program Manager
Christine Enslin
Christine King – RN
Cindy Rafferty – Accountant
Clarence S. Bibbs
Colleen Laing – Associate Director of Public Policy, United Way of King County
Colleen Oliver – Executive Director, Sheri and Les Biller Family Foundation
Damaris Pearson – Family & Community Engagement Coordinator, Seattle Public Schools
David Schaefer
Dawn Trudeau
Dr. Deborah Wilds
Dee Klem
DeeDee Loberg

Denise Anderson – Family & Community Partnerships, Federal Way Public Schools
Diane Buckley – CFO, League of Education Voters
Djana Parra – Truancy Workshop Coordinator
Dow Constantine – Executive, King County
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Holly Miller
Jackie Schultz
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Jamie Zembruski
Janet Levinger
Janis Avery
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Jill Sells – Executive Director, Reach Out and Read Washington State
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Jody Rosentswieg
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Karen DeBruler – School Board Director, Kent School District
Kate Pronovost – Grants Administrator, Nesholm Family Foundation
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Kelly Munn
Kelly Smith – Program Manager, Within Reach
Kevin Wright – King County Director, WSN Extension
Kirsten Nesholm – Teacher
Larry Seaquist
Laurel Nesholm – Community Volunteer, Nesholm Family Foundation
LaWonda Smith
Leslie Dozono – Consultant
Lika Smith – Past President, Seattle NOW
Linda Filley Bentler – Director, PSESD
Lisa Macfarlane – Washington State Director, Democrats for Education Reform
Lois Brewer – Director, Service Learning Seattle
Luisa Sanchez-Nilsen – Director of Early Learning, Federal Way Public Schools
Marcus James – Family Liaison, Federal Way Public Schools
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Mary Waldron – P-3 Systems Program Manager, PSESD
Mary Willis – Executive Director, Morris Family Foundation
Maya Vengadasalam – School Board Director, Kent School District
Mia McFarland
Mike Heinisch – Executive Director, Kent Youth and Family Services
Paula Steinke
Randy Heath – Executive Director of Student Services, Kent School District
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Renee Russak – Partner, Social Venture Partners
Ron Asher – Program Specialist, Reach Out and Read Washington State
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Saadia Hamid – Education Engagement Specialist, Seattle Housing Authority
Sara Levin – VP of Community Services, United Way of King County
Sebrena Burr – Education Advocate
Shannon Curran – Family Liaison, Federal Way Public Schools
Sharon Taubel – Parent
Stacia Jenkins – City Council Member, City of Normandy Park
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Stephanie Cherrington – Executive Director, Eastside Pathways
Steve Leahy – Washington State Director, ReadyNation
Steve Miller – Partner, Cowan, Miller & Lederman
Susan Sullivan
Suzanne Dale Estey – Economic Development Professional and Parent
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Tim Keller – Retired Physician, Volunteer, UW
Torie Gonsalves – Community Center for Education Results
Tracy Oster – Executive Director, Communities in Schools of Federal Way