



February 10, 2017

Dear Washington State policymakers:

The Cradle Through College Coalition (C2C) appreciates the difficult work you are tackling this legislative session to respond to the McCleary court order and improve outcomes for students in our state. We recognize the complexity of the K-12 system issues you are working to resolve. We are thankful for the efforts early in session put forth by the caucuses and the Governor.

Central to [C2C's principles](#) is that K-12 education without strong investments in the ends of the education continuum will not yield the results we need. **We urge you to include early learning and higher education in the conversations as you continue to develop, debate, and negotiate your education proposals.**

C2C is a statewide alliance of school districts, institutions of higher education, early learning providers, business groups, local government leaders, nonprofit organizations, and individuals. We believe that conceiving of education as a continuum that gives all kids the opportunities to get off to a strong, healthy start and includes postsecondary opportunities for career pathways and professional success is critical to Washington's future.

High-quality early learning is foundational to future success of our students in school and in life. Investing in early learning is a proven way to reduce disparities based on income and race and it puts children on a path for healthier and more productive futures. Expanding ECEAP, which Washington has wisely committed to doing, will require an increase in funds allocated per child that allows providers to maintain high-quality programs with stable staff and an investment in facilities necessary to serve children.

At the same time, as the Washington Roundtable's recent report [Washington Kids for Washington Jobs](#) notes, in the near future 73% of career jobs – jobs that require higher skill and offer higher compensation – will require some form of postsecondary degree, certification, or credential. In recognition of this market reality, groups across the state (including the Washington Student Achievement Council, Washington Roundtable and the League of Education Voters) have set a goal that by 2030, 70% of Washington students will earn a postsecondary credential. Reaching this goal will require a strong education pipeline, from early learning through higher education.

Access to postsecondary education can be assured to thousands more students by fully funding the State Need Grant. The legislature also needs to invest the necessary resources in our state's institutions of higher education so they can strengthen their supports for student success. We urge you to consider the worthy and necessary proposals for these programs and institutions as components of your larger education package.



Given the complexity and range of the state budget, and the uncertainty of agreement around revenue proposals, we believe it is not yet fully possible to determine how the competing K-12 education packages will best serve Washington’s students and their families. In order to do so, we need to see how they fit with the investments in the education continuum and what the tradeoffs are in the larger budget ecosystem. We are working hard to better understand the details and implications of the current proposals, but we also need to see them in full context.

C2C’s membership is broad – from every community college president in our state to a range of school districts, from grassroots community nonprofits to child care and early learning providers, K-12 advocates to the University of Washington – the breadth and depth of membership comes from a common understanding that we must be in this together, striving for a better future for our students and our state.

Students do not live in siloed systems. What happens in early learning, higher education, and human services can have profound impacts on their outcomes in school and life. We welcome the opportunity to engage with you around the full continuum of education and to support this important work as you continue to move forward.

Sincerely,

Cradle Through College Steering Committee

*Children's Alliance*

*College Success Foundation*

*Community Center for Education Results*

*League of Education Voters*

*Rural Alliance for College Success*

*Solid Ground*

*Stand for Children*

*Statewide Poverty Action Network*