



March 23, 2017

Dear Sen. Schoesler, Sen. Nelson, Sen. Braun, Sen. Brown, Sen. Rossi, Sen. Ranker, and Sen. Rolfes:

The Cradle Through College Coalition (C2C) was formed with the belief that unless we invest in education from early learning through higher education, we will not see the results we want for students or our state economy. We appreciate the difficult work of crafting state budgets and recognize that a great deal of work remains before there is final agreement. We urge you to make stronger investments in Washington's future in the following ways:

1. Invest in High-Quality Early Learning

Promote equity and strong outcomes from the beginning

We were disappointed to see a Senate budget that would severely harm Washington's early learning system and the outcomes for thousands of children. Our state has made a commitment to building an early learning system that will open the opportunities for all children in Washington to be successful. This budget steps back on that commitment, including pushing out the entitlement for ECEAP.

- a. We recognize and appreciate the progress represented by the March 22nd budget amendment that adds 1,200 ECEAP slots to the program. Please build upon that progress with additional ECEAP funding so that we maximize the value of the new investments in K-12 education.
- b. The proposed rate increase for ECEAP is far from sufficient to backfill the costs that ECEAP providers already bear in providing this important high-quality program.
- c. The approximately \$17 million net reduction in early learning and child care in the 2017-19 biennium will harm Washington students and will not lead to the results we desire.

2. Amply Fund K-12 Education and Target Additional Funds for Students With Highest Needs

Provide the funding necessary for all students to achieve success

The Senate budget proposal reflects policy changes in SB 5607 so we speak to both that policy bill and the budget bill in this section.

a. Further address inequitable levy system

We appreciate that the Senate proposal attempts to make progress on the issue of local levies funding basic education by capping future levies at 10%. However, we continue to have concerns about the inherent and persistent inequities in the levy system at whatever level they may remain. We urge you to maintain LEA as a tool to address the inequity between districts who have a harder or easier time raising local revenue because of significant property tax base differences.

b. Target funds for high needs students

SB 5607 adds funding enhancements for homeless students, additional funding for schools with high-concentrations of poverty, and additional funding for CTE students to the existing categorical allocations. However, C2C strongly disagrees with how the Senate proposes to define poverty and homelessness. Defining poverty using census



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data and setting the threshold at 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (\$24,300 per year for a family of four) does not adequately count low-income families. As a result, the proposal reduces the number of students who qualify to generate LAP funding and reduces the number of schools that would qualify for the newly proposed concentration factor. We urge you to retain the accepted definitions of poverty and homelessness (Free and Reduced Price Lunch and the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness, respectively). The proposed approach will not address the challenges to academic success facing low-income families. Additionally, this budget proposal eliminates funding for recently exited TBIP students, an important support in facilitating students' success.

c. Invest in solutions that meet students' needs

C2C urges the legislature to offer high poverty schools flexibility for innovative solutions that meet their students' needs. These include family engagement, dual language programs, early warning indicators for dropout prevention and re-engagement programming, additional instructional time, extended learning, and wrap-around services such as mental health counseling and housing support. While the budget does fund the AIM program for mentoring and expanded learning, that investment is insufficient to help close the opportunity and achievement gap. At the same time, the Senate budget makes deep cuts to TANF, housing, and other family support programs. The effect of these cuts would require schools to be able to address greater needs with fewer resources for students and families.

3. Open Opportunities for Postsecondary Pathways

Prepare Washington students for Washington jobs

We strongly believe that investing in the State Need Grant to give more low-income students access to postsecondary education is a critical component of the education continuum. This budget does not move us forward to opening access. Instead, it closes the door on 24,000 students in Washington who qualify for financial aid, but won't receive it. In addition, using TANF/WorkFirst funds to pay for scholarship programs in many cases impacts the very same students and their families who rely on financial assistance for postsecondary access. Taking money from human services to fund education won't help us achieve outcomes overall.

4. Ensure the Base Stability for Students Through Human Services

C2C's principles are clear that cutting health and human services in order to fund education undercuts efforts to improve student and life outcomes.

This budget proposal makes cuts to the basic safety net for families in Washington. Cutting TANF, WorkFirst, State Food Assistance, the Housing and Essential Needs program, Youth Adult Shelters, Homeless Student Stability Program, and the Young Adult Housing Program will cause instability and long term harm to children, youth and families.



5. **Pass Necessary Revenue for a Strong Education Pipeline**

Washington needs new revenue beyond what is proposed in the Senate budget. As we can see, the alternative is choosing between funding human services and housing to meet people's basic needs or giving first generation college students a shot at a postsecondary degree. Without additional funds, we are facing a proposal that takes a huge step back on the state commitment to investing in early learning. Most of all, along the full continuum of education, we will fail to close the opportunity gap or address persistent inequities. Continuing down that path will put Washington's economic future in jeopardy.

The Cradle Through College Coalition looks forward to a robust discussion around funding for the education continuum in the coming months. We recognize that budgets reflect priorities. We hope that you will push for greater investment in Washington's education system from early learning through higher education because you recognize that it's the right choice for Washington's students and future economy.

Sincerely,

C2C 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