



# THE WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

*A high-quality education system that prepares all students for college, career, and life.*

## Draft Exhibit F

May 4, 2016

Dear Members of the Education Funding Task Force:

On behalf of the State Board of Education, I want to thank you for your continued commitment to making the promise of [Article IX](#) of our state constitution -- to make “ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders” -- a reality for all Washington’s students. We appreciate the individual sacrifice that legislators make to serve our state.

The Board respects the Legislature’s ability to further study the financing of basic education programs. However, the Board wishes to reaffirm its position, originally expressed in our 2014 *McCleary* resolution, that further delays in implementing a comprehensive school finance solution have real and measurable consequences for students. As a Board, we remain concerned that the questions posed to this Task Force are similar in nature to studies already completed. We remain doubtful that your deliberations, however well intended, will fundamentally alter the difficult resource decisions you need to make next session to achieve Constitutional compliance.

The issues you have been asked to address in Chapter 3, Laws of 2016 (E2SSB 6195) are expansive. We are also aware that many are political or controversial in nature, and as a result you will receive extensive input from organizations and lobbying entities whose primary role is protecting adult-interests in the system.

Our urging to you is to frame your deliberations as a Task Force from a student-centered perspective. It is important that the adult-centered issues around [the need for new revenue sources](#), collective bargaining, local levies, and accounting procedures for local funding “enhancements” not cloud the central purpose of improving student achievement outcomes. We would recommend that your recommendations should be designed not merely to achieve legal compliance, but to positively impact student achievement. We would therefore urge the Task Force to have an explicit conversation about how its plan can meaningfully improve outcomes for our 1 million school children, almost half of whom now qualify for free and reduced price lunch programs in their school.

As you know, very high standards have been set for the students of our state. The adoption of new Washington State Learning Standards in English, Math, and Science, and aligned assessments, has challenged all students to reach a high standard of career and college-readiness upon graduation.

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These standards are ambitious but still achievable for our students. But ambitious goals require ample resources, and we are concerned that further delay will compromise our ability to provide the meaningful supports all students need to achieve.

At our May meeting, the Board heard from a panel of Yakima Valley superintendents who are struggling to attract classroom teachers. The shortage is so intense-critical as to threaten the very foundation of the basic education guarantee provided to all students. We see the teacher shortage – particularly in the Yakima region, which tends to support more modest local levy funding -- as a direct manifestation of K-12 funding shortages in our state. While the Supreme Court's finding of contempt has helped provide a sense of urgency in this matter, the direct impacts to students, such as we are seeing in the Yakima-valley, are the real call to action for all of us as policymakers to adopt a comprehensive school funding solution next session.

Sincerely,

Isabel Munoz-Colon, Chair