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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

February 27, 2025

Patty Murray, U.S. Senator
Suzan DelBene, U.S. Representative
Rick Larsen, U.S. Representative
Marie Gluesenkamp Perez, U.S. Representative
Dan Newhouse, U.S. Representative
Michael Baumgartner, U.S. Representative

Maria Cantwell, U.S. Senator
Emily Randall, U.S. Representative
Pramila Jayapal, U.S. Representative
Kim Schrier, U.S. Representative
Adam Smith, U.S. Representative
Marilyn Strickland, U.S. Representative

Dear Honorable Members of the Washington State Congressional Delegation:

I am writing you to seek bipartisan leadership to return more of Washington taxpayers' federal money back to the critical investments needed here at home.

Student Achievement

Recent results from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), otherwise known as the Nation's Report Card, tell us that our students continue to outperform the national average in both reading and math in 4th and 8th grade, but we have much more work to do. Although our relative performance stands out, the nation's overall results tell us that the introduction of smartphones and social media into our students' lives over a decade ago, as well as the COVID-19 pandemic, are having longstanding impacts on student achievement. Our students need fully funded basic education services with additional supports for those students experiencing the largest impacts.

Adequately Funding Our Schools

As you are aware, Washington is facing another state budget deficit, in part because our state tax revenues are less than the national average as a share of our economy. This deficit comes at a time when the state Legislature is already unable to keep up with inflationary materials, supplies, and operating costs, as well as increased funding needs for transportation and special education services.

Washington families currently send a total of \$22.5 billion in tax dollars to the federal government in excess of what is spent back in our state, making our state the third highest donor state in the nation. In other words, for every dollar that Washingtonians pay in federal taxes, they only see \$0.84 of that dollar returned to them. Even if an additional 10% of Washington's federal tax dollars were returned to our state, it would more than cover the \$3 billion biennial budget request I submitted to the state Legislature this year to fill the gaps in basic education services—while still leaving capacity for other critical human services and supports. Congress has a role here! You provide \$289 million in Title 1 funding, but our state supplements that with \$505 million in the Learning Assistance Program. Congress sends us \$268

million to support students with disabilities, but our state provides an additional \$2.4 billion to fully cover the costs of special education. Congress provides \$466 million for school meals, but our Legislature provides an additional \$63.3 million to fully cover the needs of our families.

Upholding Washington State's Right to Establish Learning Standards and Curriculum

The impact of this imbalance on Washingtonians is a top concern of mine, especially as we see the President seeking to leverage our constituents' tax dollars, returning them only if we give up control of our learning standards and our curriculum—rights that have always existed with the states.

This is not a partisan issue. As our state Legislature is navigating a budget deficit of \$12–15 billion over the next four years, we must face the uncomfortable reality that we cannot keep subsidizing the rest of the nation on the backs of hardworking Washingtonians. No matter your political party, if you want these critical services to exist, or if you want tax relief at the state level, it is essential that our state recapture a large share of the annual \$22 billion+ subsidy we are providing the rest of the nation.

Our state and local voters have done their part. We are one of just two states that spent down all our K–12 emergency relief funds on time, on budget, and didn't request an extension waiver. Our school districts consistently pass their local levies – the February Special Election results show that local voters supported 91% of the requested funds for operating and capital levies.

I urge you to push back on any action by the federal government to take away resources in Washington state. Our state's rights to establish our learning standards and to allow our local schools to make their own curriculum choices need to be respected and preserved. Additionally, I hope you will lead the effort to return tax investments to your constituents. If our federal taxes are more equitably returned to us via federal appropriations, we can maintain our investments and continue to outperform the nation economically for decades to come.

My leadership team and I would like the opportunity to talk with each of you about these priorities and how we can work together to make progress. As you continue your work advocating for your constituents and our state as a whole, I encourage you to keep these critical bipartisan needs for Washington's students at the forefront of your considerations.

Thank you for your continued support of Washington's students, educators and school staff, families, and communities, and thank you for your service. Please do not hesitate to reach out to my office with any questions you may have.

Sincerely,



Chris Reykdal
Superintendent of
Public Instruction