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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

k12.wa.us

September 12, 2023

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor of Washington
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee:

It is my privilege to submit to you my K–12 Operating Budget proposal for the 2024 Supplemental Budget. With your partnership and leadership, Washington state has made progress in amply funding our K–12 schools. While this is a supplemental budget year, it is my duty to balance requests for funding that represent realistic steps with an unwavering focus on a fully funded, equitable K–12 system that eliminates barriers to opportunity for each and every student.

My office is cognizant of the difficult decisions state lawmakers had before them this past session with so many needs to address with limited funds. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) recognizes and appreciates the gains in providing students with adequate nutrition at school at no cost to their families, and continuing to focus on funding high-quality services and supports for our students with disabilities.

We have momentum, and we can't ease up now! According to Rutgers University, as of last fall, Washington remains 0.5% below the national average in funding our public schools as a share of our state's gross domestic product (GDP), and that gap is likely to widen in this fall's report. If we were to meet the national average, we would invest an additional \$3 billion each year in permanent state resources. As our state and nation continue to place higher demands on our K–12 public schools, these additional dollars could be a distinguishing factor in our schools' ability to meet those demands. This budget request will also help Washington to come into compliance with federal Maintenance of Effort and Maintenance of Equity requirements.

Washington's students experienced opportunity gaps long before the COVID pandemic. While the past few years brought much needed attention to the inequities that persist in our K–12 education system and the many and different barriers faced by students across the state, I want to be clear that the problems and solutions put forward in this year's supplemental budget request speak to deep, systemic issues. Through targeted investments in the types of

proven strategies outlined in our agency decision packages, we can not only build on current pandemic recovery efforts, but also continue to address the real barriers facing our learners.

To learn, students need to be engaged physically, emotionally, and intellectually in their classrooms, and they need to have consistent access to nutritious meals. OSPI's requests aim to increase funding for integrated student supports that meet the varied needs of students and families who have disconnected partially or fully from our K-12 system. In addition, we are requesting to take the immediate next step on our path to universal meals and feed our youngest learners in all public elementary students in the state. Lastly, our special education funding models continue to fall short of what districts need to serve all students, and I appreciate the commitment expressed by you and our legislative partners to find solutions. Removing the special education cap and funding the inclusionary practices work mandated by lawmakers this year are a couple of the key strategies I propose to you and to our Legislature.

In addition, we know that high-quality service delivery to students requires investments in those who are directly providing the services, and OSPI's budget priorities include pay equity for paraeducators and funding for stronger supports for existing, new, and incoming principals. Our requests also further legislative efforts in the biennial budget to invest in teacher residency programs for special education teachers. Further, Washington needs to prioritize sustained investments in strong pathways for K-12 students to bring student postsecondary achievement in line with the needs of industries and employers statewide. This year's request helps bridge the current gap in credentialing by focusing on college readiness, with a particular focus on the technology sector though increased funding for the IT Academy.

Finally, a strong and customer focused OSPI relies on state investments in agency staffing. This year, I am requesting overall pay equity for OSPI staff, and funding for three critical new positions that will allow OSPI to better partner with and serve our school districts, stakeholders, and lawmakers who rely on OSPI for complex systemwide data and expertise.

Thank you for your continued advocacy on behalf of our students, families, educators, and schools. I am confident that together we can and will do better. Our students deserve a public education system energized by the same values that define our state and drive our industries; a focus on equitable opportunity for every Washingtonian, a commitment to innovation, pride in and respect for the unique offerings of different communities across the state, and adaptable, future-forward thinking.

Sincerely,



Chris Reykdal
Superintendent of
Public Instruction