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Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
Chris Reykdal, Superintendent

September 24, 2025

The Honorable Bob Ferguson
Governor of Washington
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Re: 2026 Supplemental K–12 Capital Budget Proposal

Dear Governor Ferguson:

A high-quality public education requires safe, effective classrooms and adequate learning spaces. Issues from lead in our children's drinking water to the lack of seismically safe infrastructure in our schools continue to threaten the health and safety of our students and school staff. Communities and lawmakers have been working together to mitigate these risks and have made significant progress; however, the state's current grant programs that aim to address these issues continue to exacerbate inequities, particularly between school districts that can raise sufficient local capital funding and those that cannot.

Every student in Washington deserves to learn in a facility that is healthy, safe, and supportive. To that end, I am elevating to you the most immediate building and facilities needs of Washington's K–12 education system for your consideration and for inclusion in your 2026 Supplemental K–12 Capital Budget proposal.

The state's Capital Budget provides resources for the necessary and essential construction and modernization of school facilities to address new and longstanding health and safety concerns. The largest of the state's investments is in the School Construction Assistance Program (SCAP), which supports school districts that are able to secure local capital funding. Despite the Legislature's progress in recent years, this program has been significantly underfunded for decades, meaning the list of outstanding projects is long, and inadequate facilities continue to negatively impact students across the state.

Today, the average construction cost in Washington is about \$900 per square foot, yet SCAP provides only \$375, less than half the actual cost, leaving local communities to make up the

difference. Insufficient state funding exacerbates existing inequities between the state's wealthier communities and those that are less resourced, with some districts to able to afford construction of modern, high-quality schools, while others continue to see their students stuck in outdated facilities that often fail to meet current health, energy, or seismic standards.

My 2026 Supplemental Capital Budget proposal takes into consideration our state's current financial constraints and targets two urgent health and safety issues alongside longstanding facility needs.

My key priorities include:

- **Seismic Safety:** Continued funding for the School Seismic Safety Program, including seismic retrofits, building relocations, and tsunami tower installations for vulnerable coastal schools.
- **Small District Modernization:** Continued funding for the Small District Modernization Grant Program to complete ongoing projects and cover planning grants that were not funded in the 2025–27 biennial budget.
- **Healthy Schools:** Continued funding for the Healthy Kids–Healthy Schools Lead in Water Remediation Grant Program to fund facility remediations, installing certified water filters, or adding bottle-filling stations.

Public education is Washington state's paramount duty, and students and families deserve to see that promise reflected in their school buildings. Instead, we expect our children to thrive while they are exposed to lead in school drinking water; sitting in rooms that were not built to withstand earthquakes; and spending some or all of their K–12 years in buildings that don't adequately filter wildfire smoke in the fall, freeze in the winter, and are sweltering by late spring.

As you partner with lawmakers to steward state resources, I implore you to support this short list of investments in the very foundation and infrastructure of our K–12 system.

Sincerely,



Chris Reykdal
Superintendent of
Public Instruction