

Governor Christine O. Gregoire
Office of the Governor
416 Sid Snyder Ave SW, Suite 200
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002
Fax: 360-753-4110

Cc: Senate Majority Leader Lisa Brown
Speaker of the House Frank Chopp
Seattle Legislative Delegation

RE: Elimination of Funding for Highly Capable Learners

December 5, 2010

Dear Governor Gregoire:

We are writing to urge you to retain education funding for highly capable programs in the 2009-2011 2nd supplemental budget. Cutting highly capable funding is a tiny, short-term minor budget fix that will adversely affect the future of Washington's most advanced learners.

The legislature recognized in ESHB 2261 that **gifted education is basic education for Washington's highly capable learners.** Further, the Highly Capable Technical Working Group convened by OSPI, recently completed its report highlighting best practices and needs for Washington in order to ensure that highly capable learners' education meets the basic education definition. We need to commit to implementing the report's recommendations and positioning our state as a competitive state for highly capable children. **Please do not assume that gifted education is an 'enhancement' that can be sacrificed in bad economic times.**

In Seattle alone, cutting this funding will force the Seattle Public Schools to either fully fund identification and testing of children, or shut down its ALO, Spectrum and APP programs. Seattle would lose approximately \$400,000 in funding. We understand that there is also a discussion of eliminating all state funding for bus transportation for the APP program, which is critical for Seattle to be able to appropriately serve highly capable program in a cohort group, important to their social-emotional and intellectual development.

This proposal is short-sighted for many reasons, including putting more kids at risk of high school drop-out, and negatively impacting economic development. According to the National Association of Gifted Children (NAGC), between 18-25% of all gifted children eventually drop out of school.¹ As Washington works towards improving our education system, including highly capable children in all educational improvement strategies is crucial. Eliminating their opportunities will cost the state more in the long run if these children drop out of school, not to mention the wasted human potential.

Businesses recognize the importance of having a highly trained workforce in order to be internationally competitive. In fact, according to NAGC, **South Carolina**, a state to which we have recently lost significant business opportunities, **invests \$26 million in gifted education at a**

¹ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Report to the Washington State Legislature and the Quality Education Council, Highly Capable Program Technical Working Group Recommendations, November, 2010, accessed December 4, 2010, <https://www.k12.wa.us/HighlyCapable/Workgroup/pubdocs/HighCapReport11-30.pdf>, p. 3

rate three times what Washington does², prior to this proposed cut. The National Science Foundation report, Preparing the Next Generation of STEM Innovators: Identifying and Developing our Nation's Human Capital, states clearly what business leaders already know: We are failing our highly capable children and need increased investment and strengthening in their education. It recommends: 1) Providing opportunities for excellence to challenge and inspire students, 2) casting a wide net to identify all types of talents in all demographics of students, and 3) fostering a supportive ecosystem where excellence is celebrated.

We look forward to working constructively with our legislative delegation to ensure that highly capable learners are treated equitably and that there is not an erroneous perception that during an economic down turn these young people can 'take care of themselves.' The evidence demonstrates otherwise, and we simply must not turn our backs on them.

Please ensure that your final 2nd Supplemental budget does not eliminate this funding.

Sincerely,

² National Association for Gifted Children, "Gifted by State," Accessed December 4, 2010, <http://www.nagc.org/index.aspx?id=37>