

February 27, 2007

Dear Senator or Representative,

Three months ago our organizations were issued a challenge.

We wrote to you in November stressing the need for a highly-educated and trained workforce. We emphasized that our children must be deeply grounded in math and science to reap the benefits of the 21st century economy. We also noted that while our state boasts a highly-educated workforce, employers must look outside of Washington to fill high-wage jobs, since local graduates often lack the math and science skills we need.

In response, we were asked to get involved. To define our priorities. To help build broader support for the educational scaffolding that we all agree is necessary for our children to succeed.

We took these comments and recommendations seriously and in December, a coalition of business and labor associations launched the College & Work Ready Agenda. Throughout the legislative session—and in years to come—we will use our collective voice to advocate for progress in four key areas we stressed to you are important for career and work success:

- Strengthen the quality of early learning programs.
- Improve K-12 math and science curriculum and alignment to ensure all high school graduates are prepared for college and work.
- Immediately fill capacity in high-demand fields and increase production by 10,000 degrees by 2020.
- Enhance state support for our public research universities and graduate education in science and engineering.

We recently launched a Web site (www.collegeworkready.org) to provide more detailed information about each of these priority areas, and to showcase the best research and resources on college and work readiness issues. We also launched a public information campaign that will focus more specifically on the importance of students getting a strong foundation in math and science. This campaign includes a statewide speakers bureau targeting business leaders; radio and TV Public Service Announcements; parent and community forums; and a variety of print and electronic resources for schools, districts and community organizations. Translated materials will also be available.

The College & Work Ready Agenda advocates for important reforms to help deepen and accelerate Washington's 12-year effort to improve the quality of our schools. It is also critical that we do a better job of aligning high school graduation requirements with college and workplace expectations.

We all want the same thing for Washington's children. We want them to have the tools for success clasped in one hand, when they hold their diploma in the other. As organizations representing a wide cross-section of Washington employers, we want to hire our own children for high-demand jobs in mathematics, life sciences, engineering, computer programming, nursing and teaching.

We stand united in our commitment to continue to work on these issues not only this session but also in the coming years. Together, we can make significant progress on the College & Work Ready Agenda this session, and we hope we can count on your support.

If you have any questions about the coalition's advocacy efforts please call Marc Frazer at the Washington Roundtable (206.225.0705) or Angela Kerwin at the Prosperity Partnership (206.419.0371). For more information on our communications campaign, please call Melissa Heaton at Partnership for Learning (206.625.9655).

Sincerely,



Don Brunell, President
Association of Washington Business



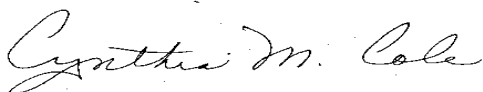
Stacey Cowles, Chair
Washington Roundtable



Robert Drewel, Executive Director
Puget Sound Regional Council



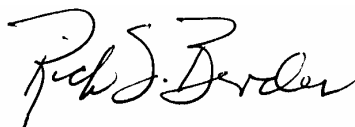
Steve Leahy, President & CEO
Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce



Cynthia Cole, President
Society of Professional Engineering Employees
in Aerospace, IFPTE 2001



Ken Myer, President & Chief Executive Officer
WSA (Washington Software Alliance)



Rick Bender, President
Washington State Labor Council



Brad Smith, President
Partnership for Learning




Susannah Malarkey, Executive Director
Technology Alliance



Kristofer T. Johnson, President & CEO
Tri-City Regional Chamber of Commerce



Jack Faris, Ph.D., President
Washington Biotechnology & Biomedical Association



Terry Byington, Executive Director
American Electronics Association



Kim Zentz, Executive Director
Spokane Intercollegiate Research
and Technology Institute



Carl F. Adrian, President & CEO
Tri-City Development Council



Bart Phillips, President
Columbia River Development Council



Martin Straub, President & Director
Greater Wenatchee Area Technology Alliance



David Graybill, President & CEO
Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber