

May 25, 2007

The Honorable <Name>
Washington State <Senate or House of Representatives>
<Address>
Olympia, WA <Zip>

Dear <Senator or Representative> <Name>:

Our coalition of business and labor organizations supporting the College & Work Ready Agenda for Washington identified four educational priorities heading into the 2007 session. Following is our perspective on outcomes.

Strengthen the quality of early learning programs:

Our state's early learning programs will be enhanced through additional training resources for providers and creation of a voluntary rating system for childcare and early learning centers. We are also pleased by the legislature's support for phasing in all-day kindergarten in low-income schools. The state has recognized the central importance of early learning in a child's future success and we applaud the strategic steps taken in this area.

Improve K-12 math and science education and alignment:

Some important gains were made: State math and science standards will be strengthened, and a limited number of curricula will focus instruction. Additional investment in LASER will expand inquiry-based science education to 500 new classrooms. Students who have not passed the math WASL during the delay period established by ESSB 6023 will be required to take additional math classes, and the State Board of Education has been directed to increase the minimum math course-taking requirements for high school graduation. Students will also benefit from having access to a standardized college readiness exam in math as provided in HB 1906 and the 2007-2009 budget.

However, we are disappointed by the length of delay in the state's math and science graduation requirements. A five-year delay is too long. In addition, ESSB 6023 allows students to access alternative assessments after only one attempt at the 10th grade WASL and opens the door to a multitude of alternative options that are not aligned with state standards. By doing this, the state has effectively abandoned its effort to hold students to common standards, undermined the integrity of the accountability system and sent the message that our public schools are not capable of responding to the needs of students on a timetable that reflects the pace of change in the global economy.

Our coalition pledges to work with you, the governor and state education agencies to ensure that Washington's standards are meaningful and assessments are aligned with the knowledge and skills needed for our children to be successful in college and the workplace.

Increase production of bachelor's degrees in high-demand fields:

We applaud the legislature and the governor for passing SSB 5731, a bill that codifies the goal of producing an additional 10,000 bachelor's degrees in high demand fields by 2020, and for funding additional slots in these fields within the existing physical capacity at our public higher education institutions for the 2007-2009 biennium. We also continue our strong support for increased per-student higher education funding over the next 10 years in comparison to the Global Challenge States. However, providing more

opportunities for high quality college education must also remain a priority if we want our own children to be prepared to obtain the good-paying jobs of tomorrow and for Washington to be competitive in the global marketplace.

Enhance support for research and graduate education:


We were pleased that the legislature provided support for academic research in areas of opportunity such as global health, agriculture, and bioproducts. These investments in higher education research will reap benefits by enhancing academic opportunities at our universities and driving innovations that will result in economic gains.

Our coalition will continue and expand its efforts to raise public awareness about the skills students will need to succeed in a 21st century economy. We look forward to continuing our dialogue with you in the coming months.

Sincerely,



Don Brunell, President
Association of Washington Business



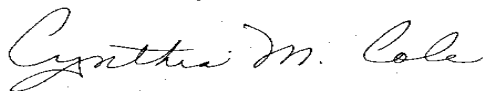
Steve Mullin, President
Washington Roundtable



Robert Drewel, Executive Director
Puget Sound Regional Council



Steve Leahy, President & CEO
Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce



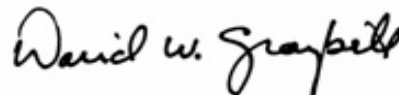
Cynthia Cole, President
Society of Professional Engineering Employees
in Aerospace, IFPTE 2001



Melissa Heaton, Executive Director
Partnership for Learning



Susannah Malarkey, Executive Director
Technology Alliance



David Graybill, President & CEO
Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber



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



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



Ken Myer, President & Chief Executive Officer
WSA



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