

The Paramount Duty Coalition

May 1, 2011

Dear Honorable Members of the Washington State Legislature,

As the House and Senate work together on a biennial budget that addresses an unprecedented shortfall with drastic cuts, we urge you to protect the one state priority that ensures our economic future: our public education system. **Please maintain the level of K-12 funding included in the House budget.** The Paramount Duty Coalition is united in this request. While we believe that neither the House nor the Senate budget levels for K-12 education are adequate, the House level is the less harmful choice.

The public school students of our state already are bearing more than their share of the burden of Washington's economic problems. The 2009-2011 supplemental budget cut some \$2 billion from K-12 education. Reductions in K-4 class size funding made retroactive to the beginning of the 2010-2011 school year exacerbated those cuts as school districts were forced to fund what the state would not. These cuts have forced schools to eliminate programs that help kids who are struggling with math and science, to crowd even more students into classrooms, to delay updates to curriculum and to abolish training for teachers and paraeducators.

The House budget proposes another \$1.6 billion in cuts on top of the \$2 billion already implemented. Make no mistake: These cuts will hurt students. And by hurting students, we hurt Washington's chances of building an educated workforce that will help us better weather future economic crises. Yet, the Coalition finds itself in the difficult position of advocating for the lesser of two harmful funding cuts.

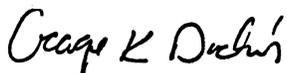
We understand that you are faced with the most difficult decisions of your political career. None of us envies the painful choices you must make. But we respectfully ask that you consider what public education already has sacrificed as you address our request to hold K-12 budget cuts to the House budget level.

Our Coalition represents more than 115,000 teachers, support staff, principals, superintendents and school board members – the people who govern, lead and work day by day to educate our children. Our constituencies' reach extends to hundreds of thousands of parents and other voters who share our belief that the Legislature must abide by its constitutional paramount duty to amply fund public education for all students. We look forward to sharing with them your response to our request.

Sincerely,



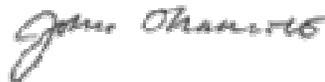
Gary Kipp, Executive Director
Association of Washington School Principals



George Dockins, Executive Director
Public School Employees of Washington



Paul Rosier, Executive Director
Washington Association of School Administrators



John Okamoto, Executive Director
Washington Education Association



Jonelle Adams, Executive Director
Washington State School Directors Association