



February 2, 2011

Dear Legislator:

On behalf of the statewide organizations representing teachers, classified school employees, principals, superintendents and school board directors, we are writing in opposition to Senate Bill 5399 and House Bill 1609, the teacher layoff bills.

These bills undermine important school reform already underway and do nothing to prevent teacher layoffs.

Administrators, school boards and teachers already are working to develop new evaluation systems (mandated by last year's SB 6696) that help identify and support effective teachers.

The new research-based evaluation effort is a balance of state and local input, it's fair and it's based on what works in the classroom. We are making progress toward developing more rigorous and effective systems for evaluating teachers, and we are using student performance data to improve teaching. SB 5399 and HB 1609 are divisive and will divert time and energy away from this productive and collaborative work. SB 5399 and HB 1609 are a distraction that we cannot afford.

Furthermore, SB 5399 and HB 1609 do nothing to prevent additional teacher layoffs and budget cuts, which is the biggest problem our schools face. We are 48th in the country in class size, and we're laying off teachers and support professionals when enrollment is going up.

If you have questions regarding the K-12 education community's opposition to SB 5399 and HB 1609, please contact us. Thank you for respecting the work educators already are doing to strengthen our public schools.

Sincerely,

Association of Washington School Principals – Executive Director, Gary Kipp

Public School Employees of Washington – Executive Director, George Dockins

Washington Association of School Administrators – Executive Director, Paul Rosier

Washington Education Association – Executive Director, John Okamoto

Washington State School Directors' Association – Executive Director, Dr. Jonelle Adams