



## 2019 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

As the Board of Directors and Superintendent for the Mount Vernon School District, serving approximately 6,700 students, we recognize the challenges faced by our fellow elected officials at the State level. We greatly value the Legislature's effort to deliver on the promise to make significant investments in K-12 public education. Our students deserve nothing less. We remain a committed partner with the Legislature to:

### ➤ **Increase equity of new funding model**

2017 and 2018 education funding policies resulted in unintended consequences and inequities across districts. OSPI has identified the Mount Vernon School District as one of the 19 districts in the state identified as most at risk for financial instability under the new funding system. This is because:

1. We rank 19<sup>th</sup> out of 295 school districts in the percentage reduction of our Educational Programs and Operations (EPO) Levy.
2. On average, we are paying \$7,000 more per certificated instructional staff than we are receiving in state funding.

Put simply, our district's assessed valuation is more similar to districts in Eastern Washington, while in order to recruit and retain highly qualified certificated instructional staff, our salaries resemble those paid by Western Washington districts.

The Mount Vernon School District will lose \$10.0 million of our EPO levy funding beginning with the 2019-20 school year, while our operating costs will increase by approximately \$9.0 million. Accounting for the \$13.0 million in additional non-designated state revenue we are expected to receive, we are on track to face a budget gap of approximately \$6.0 million.

We are aware that some districts and elected officials are advocating to raise the levy cap as a way to address districts' loss of EPO levy revenue. We oppose this solution as it would create further inequities among districts and believe it is in contrast to the spirit of the McCleary decision.

As an alternative, we urge you to consider addressing the problem by:

- A. Retaining the \$1.50 per \$1,000 levy cap, but fund all districts up to \$2,500 per student by increasing Levy Equalization funding.
- B. Standardize teacher salaries by region.

### ➤ **Delay Implementation of the School Employee Benefits Board (SEBB)**

EHB 2242 implemented the SEBB with the goals of greater efficiency and cost savings for employee health benefits. As the January 1, 2020 implementation date approaches, there is growing uncertainty whether these goals are achievable. Our district would incur an estimated \$1.2 million in unfunded obligations to implement SEBB. Implementation should be delayed for further study of the costs and impacts to school districts and ESDs.