



March 31, 2017

Dear Speaker Chopp, Rep. Kristiansen, Rep. Sullivan, Rep. Ormsby, Rep. Chandler, Rep. Robinson, Rep. MacEwen, Rep. Stokesbary:

The Cradle Through College Coalition (C2C) was formed with the belief that unless we invest in education from early learning through higher education, we will not see the results we want for students or our state economy. We appreciate the difficult work of crafting state budgets and recognize that a great deal of work remains before there is final agreement.

We appreciate that your budget proposal makes investments in the full education continuum of education, including in ECEAP and the State Need Grant. At the same time, there are some areas of the proposal that we hope can be improved in the process. Below we outline the areas that we support and what we hope to see improved in the final budget.

**1. Invest in High-Quality Early Learning**

*Promote equity and strong outcomes from the beginning*

Our state has made a commitment to building an early learning system that will open the opportunities for all children in Washington to be successful. This budget takes steps forward on our commitment to ECEAP.

- a. Expansion of an additional 2,043 ECEAP slots in the 2017-19 biennium is a positive and important step in meeting the commitment to serve all eligible children in this program. However, while the budget outlook for 2019-2021 shows an investment of \$26 million in ECEAP in FY 2020, it also shows a reduction of \$20 million in FY 2021. In order to meet the commitment to ECEAP, the state needs to make steady progress on expanding this program every year.
- b. While we appreciate the proposed rate increase to ECEAP of 3% for part- and extended-day programs and 6% for full-day programs, the increase remains insufficient to backfill the costs that ECEAP providers already bear in providing this important high-quality program.

**2. Amply Fund K-12 Education and Target Additional Funds for Students With Highest Needs**

*Provide the funding necessary for all students to achieve success.*

While the House budget does not propose harmful cuts to the system, it also misses the chance to take bold action to ensure we achieve positive student outcomes and close the widening opportunity gap. The removal of staff mix could result in more equitable distribution of state funding, but that change is not enough. Greater and more urgent action is needed to reverse current inequities by ensuring additional resources get to the students with the greatest needs.

**a. Address inequitable levy system**

We are disappointed that the House proposal does little to address the continuing issue of local levies, only reducing the levy authority from 28 percent to 24 percent. We recognize that eliminating the grandfathering of districts is a positive step, but we



continue to have concerns about the inherent and persistent inequities in the levy system and believe bolder action is necessary.

**b. Target funds for high needs students**

We appreciate that the House proposal makes investments in the Learning Assistance Program, Transitional Bilingual Instructional Program, Highly Capable Program, Career and Technical Education, and student support staff. However, we remain concerned that the House's approach lacks transparency and accountability when it comes to ensuring that funds are actually utilized to address the higher needs of students in poverty and other students who may need extra support.

**c. Invest in solutions that meet students' needs**

C2C urges the legislature to offer high poverty schools flexibility for innovative solutions that meet their students' needs. These include family engagement, dual language programs, early warning indicators for dropout prevention and re-engagement programming, additional instructional time, extended learning, and wrap-around services such as mental health counseling and housing support. The House budget makes investments that include parent engagement coordinators, mental health pilot projects, and a continuation of a bilingual educator grant, but there are not significant, systemic changes to enable schools to better serve students.

**3. Open Opportunities for Postsecondary Pathways**

*Prepare Washington students for Washington jobs*

- a. We strongly believe that investing in the State Need Grant to give more low-income students access to postsecondary education is a critical component of the education continuum. We appreciate that this budget opens the door for 6,000 more students in Washington to receive a State Need Grant. While we want to see all 24,000 unserved students gain access, we recognize that this moves us closer to our goal.
- b. Community and technical colleges serve a more diverse and economically challenged population and therefore have a greater need for student advising and supports. We were very pleased to see the proposed increase for CTCs to use Guided Pathways, or a similar model designed to improve student success, to better serve students in this system.
- c. College affordability continues to be a barrier for students in Washington seeking postsecondary opportunities. We appreciate that the House proposal includes a tuition freeze and backfill for public institutions of higher education in Washington.

**4. Ensure the Base Stability for Students Through Human Services**

C2C's principles are clear that cutting health and human services to fund education undercuts efforts to improve student and life outcomes.

We appreciate the increased funding in the budget to address homelessness and for increasing the TANF, State Family Assistance, and Refugee Cash Assistance Program grant amounts. These programs can help stabilize families and give students a better



chance to focus on learning.

**5. Pass Necessary Revenue for a Strong Education Pipeline**

As evidenced by the Senate budget proposal, without additional funds, we will fail to invest in programs to close the opportunity gap or address persistent inequities. Continuing down that path will put Washington’s economic future in jeopardy. We appreciate that the House continues to work on revenue proposals in order to fund the full continuum.

The Cradle Through College Coalition looks forward to a robust discussion around revenue and funding for the education continuum in the coming months. We recognize that budgets reflect priorities. We hope that you will push for greater investment in Washington’s education system from early learning through higher education because you recognize that it’s the right choice for Washington’s students and future economy.

Sincerely,

C2C Steering Committee

*Children’s Alliance*

*College Success Foundation*

*Community Center for Education Results*

*League of Education Voters*

*Rural Alliance for College Success*

*Solid Ground*

*Stand for Children*

*Statewide Poverty Action Network*