

February 8th, 2024

Dear Washington State Legislators,

The undersigned 15 organizations urge you to **vote yes on HB 2239**, sponsored by Representatives Timmons and Eslick, supporting Washington students' well-being through instruction in social-emotional skills, and providing necessary resources to effectively implement such instruction.

Teaching social-emotional skills equips students with the skills they need to establish healthy relationships, create safe learning environments, work well with others, and to learn.

Washington ranks 39th on [Mental Health America's 2022 youth ranking](#) due to the state's higher prevalence of mental illness and lower rates of access to care, and according to the [Children's Alliance 2023 report on the adolescent mental health crisis](#):

- 58% of Washington youth in grades 8-12 experience one or more symptoms of anxiety or depression;
- And 20% need professional levels of care for clinically diagnosable depression and/or anxiety.

Social-emotional skills can help:

- [Reduce depressive symptoms.](#)
- [Reduce anxiety.](#)
- [Reduce risk taking behavior.](#)
- [Improve problem-solving, decision-making, and resilience.](#)
- [Improve mental health and wellbeing.](#)

For every dollar spent on students' social-emotional skill development, [there's an average return on investment of \\$11.](#)

While these skills are first taught and practiced at home, schools and educators are vital to students' continued development of such skills given how much time they will spend in schools interacting with their peers and others.

Addressing youth mental health and wellbeing is critical. Washington children and youth deserve, and desperately need, continued and sustained support to comprehensively address their wellbeing and HB 2239 is another necessary step in that direction. **Vote yes on HB 2239.**

Sincerely,

Committee for Children
Washington State Association of School
Psychologists
Washington Association for Colleges of Teacher
Education
School's Out Washington
SEL for Washington, a project of Roots of Inclusion
The League of Education Voters
MENTOR Washington

Girl Scouts of Western Washington
Washington Chapter of the American Academy of
Pediatrics
CHOOSE 180
Foundation for Healthy Generations
TeamChild
Washington Education Association
Communities In Schools Washington
Washington State Psychological Association