

May 3, 2017

Superintendent Enfield and Members of the Board,

I am Sue McCabe, HEA President. On behalf of the approximately 1,500 members of the Highline Education Association, and in particular, the HEA Executive Board, I'd like to express some concerns about the Puget Sound ESD Funding Position paper signed by Superintendent Enfield and 33 other area superintendents and dated April 14, 2017.

Initially, upon learning of this letter, the HEA Executive Board drafted a letter outlining our concerns to be delivered this evening. However, we want to acknowledge that Highline SD leadership made it a priority to reach out to me to ask for a conversation, and share that we appreciated our meeting today with Steve Grubb and Duggan Harmon.

At today's meeting, we were able to outline many areas where HEA and HSD agree. We clearly stand strong together in our expectation for the state to fully fund public education, and we are both opposed to the education funding plan proposed by the Senate, which fails to provide the ample funding students and educators need. In our meeting, HSD administrators provided additional clarity around aspects of the letter such as per-pupil funding, and we are reassured that the intent there was not to advocate for a step toward charters and vouchers, but rather, to advocate for the prototypical school model for funding – as well as other recommendations contained within the Quality Education Council's report.

That said, we do still have two major concerns:

First, we oppose the recommendations in the letter calling for "guardrails" to collective bargaining, including and perhaps especially, TRI bargaining. We do not believe that additional guardrails beyond those already contained in statute are either necessary or prudent, and we must be clear that HEA opposes any limits on existing collective bargaining rights for K-12 certificated and classified school employees, whether through budget language or by directly changing the existing bargaining laws. While we were able to begin a discussion today on this apparent area of disagreement, it is an area that will require more in depth conversation to fully address.

Second, collective bargaining works best when there is mutual trust, respect and open communication. Unfortunately, we believe these principles were not honored when the ESD Funding Paper was signed without either consulting with, or providing notice to, HEA and other employee unions regarding the recommendations included in this letter even though they directly affect educators' compensation, work-year, and other subjects that we negotiate together. We discussed this issue at length this morning, and hope that we will not see a repeat of this in the future. If HEA and HSD are to have a truly collaborative relationship, then we must be able to consistently expect pro-active communication from you when issues impact our members.

For example, in February, the Bellevue School Board pro-actively passed a resolution in support of collective bargaining, and their superintendent declined to sign the ESD funding paper. After our discussions this morning, we are hopeful that HEA and HSD will be able to continue to build that kind of relationship. Again, we want to acknowledge and express appreciation for the efforts of Dr. Enfield and other HSD administrators to reach out to HEA leadership and begin a dialogue about the letter, and we look forward to continuing those conversations.

Additionally, I want to acknowledge the positive collaboration between the association, district, and community partners at the White Privilege Conference this past week, and I want to thank Bernard Koontz for extending that invitation to me and making it possible for me to attend as part of the HSD team. The HSD team was able to connect with School Board Director Angelica Alvarez and share a meal. Thank you for sharing your stories Angelica. Everyone on our team left excited, energized, and motivated to find ways to address racism in our schools. Our team's level of investment and commitment to bringing our learning home to Highline seemed to exceed that of many other teams I observed. It was truly impressive.

Finally, in the interest of our shared goal of achieving full funding of public education and meeting the McCleary promise, we would like your assistance in posting these signs in your cars and we invite you to join us in sign-waving in the community on Tuesday afternoons for the next month. We have information about locations and a flyer for each of you. If you have a connection to a particular school – you will see the date and location of each school on the back of the flyer. We hope to see you there.

Thank you.