

Senate Finance Committee

HB 33

Interested Party Testimony

June 8, 2023

Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Sykes, Members of the Senate Finance Committee, I am Dick Smith, Marysville Exempted Village School District Board Member. Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony on HB 33, the Biennium Budget Bill. I am testifying as an interested party.

The Senate has made a number of suggested changes to HB 33, the Biennium Budget. I want to thank the Senate for keeping the Fair School Funding Plan mostly intact. The Senate's action to maintain the updated fiscal year to 2022 base cost inputs is wonderful news. However, some other changes should be revisited before the final Senate Budget is presented to the full Senate.

The Fair School Funding Plan contains a formula that provides specific state and local responsibility for funding public schools. The local share is determined by a compacity factor calculated using both property tax and income tax calculations. The Senate's modification of the capacity calculation, eliminating the per pupil median federal adjusted gross income, creates two undesirable outcomes. It will cause a reduction in the state share of funding while increasing the local share. Additionally, this change will create more uncertainty in the state share calculation. Removal of this component undoes one of the FSFP's most important qualities, being predictable and equitable. Please restore the per pupil median federal adjusted gross income factor to the capacity equation.

Please remove the mandatory retention provisions under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee. Retention of a student for any reason is a critically important decision in the life of any child. Such decisions need to be evaluated by school teachers, administrators and parents with a goal to make the right decision for the child. That decision, to retain or not, should be based on a number of different factors. Age, socialization, academic ability in reading and other subjects, etc. all need to be part of the decision process. To retain a student based on poor test scores mandated by law has never been educationally sound. If the goal is to help an individual student be successful, the decision to retain or not need to be made based on the individual student's entire record of academic and social development. Please remove the mandatory retention provisions under the Third Grade Reading Guarantee.

One last item of concern is the Senate's budget plan to increase voucher funding by \$181.5 million more than the House version while decreasing K-12 traditional public-school districts by \$245.6 million from the House proposal. Understanding that both the House and the Senate view vouchers important does not diminish the Legislatures responsibly to fund public education. Tax cuts in other areas of the Senate's budget would cut over \$1 B dollars in the State's income. If having enough money is not an issue, if a sales tax holiday is adjustable from 2 to 14 days, please make an adjustment and replace the \$245.6 million dollars deducted from the House version of HB 33. Continued progress toward fully funding the Fair School Funding Plan is critical.

Respectfully submitted,

Dick Smith

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School Board Member
Legislative Liaison