

Kelly Cannard
McLoughlin Middle School
Vancouver, WA
kac121@mail.harvard.edu

Thank you, Chair Grimm.

My name is Kelly Cannard. I am a National Board Certified Teacher at McLoughlin Middle School in Vancouver and a doctoral student in education policy at Harvard.

3 years and 3 days ago, I sat in my economics class as the sole Washingtonian as we discussed the Washington State school finance case of 1977. What a pleasure it would be to go back and say, “Washington is on the forefront again. The legislature revamped Basic Education funding to augment teacher professionalism and equity of quality education across the state.”

In many respects, I feel you have already made great progress. As a task force, you have recognized the additional instructional needs of schools with high levels of poverty and ELL students, you have preserved important incentives for National Board Certification, and have expanded mentoring for new teachers and professional development for all teachers. And, you have taken a bold step in introducing a professional career ladder.

However, even under the pressure of a late deadline, I ask that you consider one addition – sending a clearer message to districts about equity in distributing state allocations.

The section of the appendix entitled “Allocations, Not Mandate for Spending” falls short of conveying a clear message of equity. In theory, the local community is left to make this determination – perhaps deciding that every building gets an equal distribution or perhaps deciding that each building meeting the 50% FRPL mark receive an equal share of the additional funding. Neither of these interpretations gets at the underlying principle of ensuring “all schools have the resources they need to help give all students the opportunity to be fully prepared to compete in a global economy” set forth by the legislature.

I have two examples of how such interpretations can impact our students. This is our latest community report and I would first like to point out positive steps our district has taken for at-risk students such as introducing all-day kindergarten and bilingual education at a couple of our high-needs elementary schools. But I'm troubled by page 11, where there is a picture of the marching band from our most affluent high school at the Great Wall in China. Some of my former students in the gifted program are among those pictured and I'm pleased they had such an opportunity. And while I understand the trip was not funded by the district, I wonder about the disparity of experience between this and what I find on the next page, where the district announced the cuts it has made and how it will not seek levy or bond funds at this time. In addition to listing the high-poverty schools that will not be replaced or remodeled at this time, "the Clothes Closet was closed, outdoor school was eliminated, swim lessons were shortened, and field trips and extracurricular activities were reduced."

The other example involves federal funds, but illustrates the distribution issue. Based on our population numbers in the fall, our district distributes funding to cover the staff cost of conducting 100 staffings for students with special needs. However, given the transiency of our population, we end up conducting closer to 160 staffings in a year, with no additional funding.

I urge the task force to clarify the intent for genuine equity – that which offers all students as close to an equal educational chance as we possibly can. At a minimum, I suggest adding a sentence at the end of the paragraph on allocations that reinforces the state's commitment to differentiated distribution of basic education funding for the purpose of achieving equity of educational opportunity.

Thank you for your time and I would be happy to answer any questions you may have about this or any other parts of the proposal I didn't have time to talk about.