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EDUCATION
ASSOCIATION

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Mary Lindquist, President
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Laura Bay, President
Washington State PTA
2003 65th Avenue W.
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Dear Laura:

As you state in your letter of April 18, our respective organizations knew that, in this legislative session, "there would inevitably be issues on which we would not agree."

It is unfortunate that our associations stand divided on HB 2261. Many educators are proud members of both organizations.

For two associations whose members – educators and parents – care passionately about children and their education, it is a difficult time. Our K-12 public schools and colleges are facing nearly \$2 billion in immediate state budget cuts. Dealing with the impact of those cuts is particularly difficult when our common interest is providing the highest quality public school education for all Washington children.

In addition to the children, we also have a responsibility to the stakeholders we represent. As you know, both of our groups have participated in countless discussions with legislators, the superintendent of public instruction, the governor and her representatives, other advocacy groups, and budget policy decision-makers. And in those discussions, WEA has consistently opposed this legislation.

I know that you and other PTA leaders share our belief that the state budget deficit cannot be solved on the backs of educators or our students, either in the short or long-term. Unfortunately, many of those involved in the discussions about HB 2261 have chosen to ignore the perspective and wisdom of the professional educators in the classroom. It is that lack of respect – intended or not – that has left many, many education employees feeling that they are being blamed for the problems caused by years of inadequate state funding for schools.

I wish our legislative leaders had shown the foresight to avoid this situation. Since before the session began on Jan. 12, WEA has urged legislators to focus on real school funding solutions. We urged them to avoid divisive legislation that promised increased funding years down the road yet failed to address the immediate education funding crisis.

WEA opposed passage of HB 2261 for exactly that simple reason. The bill has no funding. Incredibly, it allows the Legislature to further weaken its commitment to fully funding basic education.

WEA cannot support any legislation that allows the state to further reduce funding for schools, regardless of the promises and political rhetoric.

Today is the 100th day of the 2009 legislative session. When it began, I had strong hope that our political leaders would show the courage and leadership needed to solve the education funding crisis. With the passage of HB 2261, that seems unlikely this year. Still, WEA members will continue to fight for the adequate and stable funding our public schools need to ensure success for all students.

Sincerely,

Mary Lindquist
President