

September 21, 2021

Dear Governor Inslee and Superintendent Reykdal,

We know that leading through a pandemic has been challenging. We have appreciated your support in reopening schools and emphasis on in-person learning. Like you, we share a fervent desire for learning recovery for our students and families. COVID-19 had an equally detrimental impact on every student and every school district regardless of race, gender, or socio-economic status. The COVID-19 mitigations outlined by the state are also mandated for every student in every school district equally.

Yet the distribution of the federal Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Funding by Washington State's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) has been wildly inequitable. The federal funding formula allocated based on the percentage of Title 1 students in each school district, but with the provision for OSPI to holdback 10% of the overall ESSER funding to distribute how each state saw fit. For Washington that is 10% of \$2.6 billion which is more than enough to equitably support the 16 school districts who were allocated <\$500 per student so that they too can be funded at the average of ~\$3,200 per student for federal ESSER recovery dollars.

This funding gap translates to more than \$40 million compared to similar size districts (Appendix A). Stated another way, comparing to school districts who received a similar amount of ESSER funding, Issaquah has 15,000 more students on average (Appendix B). This is wholly inequitable and inadequate.

Last school year, to support in-person learning, we spent XX million to hire additional elementary teachers and support both in-person and remote learning. We spent XX million in COVID-19 mitigation costs, and due to steep enrollment declines we spent XX million of our fund balance for a total COVID-related costs to our district last year of XX million (Appendix C). We are only receiving XX million in ESSER recovery dollars which has a significant negative impact to our fund balance, even in spite of having to initiate a Reduction-in-Force that impacted >300 certificated employees.

More importantly, given the gap of >\$20 million from what we spent versus what we received in recovery dollars, we do not have federal or state recovery dollars to support the academic, socio-emotional, and mental health interventions our students need and deserve as they return to full in-person learning. Nor do we have fund balance remaining to support a district-funded remote learning option for our K-6 students who are not yet vaccinated (which our community wanted and not having this resulted in further enrollment declines this year), or support testing and smaller class sizes which would be ideal to maximize physical distancing in our return to in-person learning.

How do nearby districts similar in size, need an additional >\$70 million dollars for recovery than our school district this year? We are asking you make our district whole by directing OSPI to equitably allocate the 10% of the \$185,378,802 ESSER III dollars set aside to support each and every of Washington's 1.2 million school children, including ours. We are asking you to give our students, teachers, and community the same opportunity for educational support and recovery.

Sincerely,

Suzanne Weaver
President, Board of Directors
Issaquah School District

Harlan Gallinger
Legislative Representative, Board of Directors
Issaquah School District

Appendix A. School District Funding by Enrollments Closest to Issaquah School District

School District	Enrollment ¹	Total ESSER Funding ²
Pasco School District	19226	\$ 57,291,949
Kennewick School District	19475	\$ 58,698,481
Highline School District	19507	\$ 84,770,608
Bethel School District	20791	\$ 39,953,336
Everett School District	21138	\$ 35,713,729
Issaquah School District	21455	\$ 7,102,649
Edmonds School District	21664	\$ 31,535,984
Bellevue School District	21764	\$ 22,214,462
Federal Way School District	23321	\$ 82,127,270
Vancouver School District	23327	\$ 32,703,834
Puyallup School District	23566	\$ 69,987,016
average	21385	\$ 47,463,574

¹Enrollments from OSPI "School District Reopening Status"

²Total ESSER Funding from OSPI "Combined ESSER Restatement"

Appendix B. School District Funding by Amounts Closest to Issaquah School District

School District	Enrollment ³	Total ESSER Funding ²
FIFE	3,785	\$ 6,025,808
CHEHALIS	3,068	\$ 6,150,958
ENUMCLAW	4,145	\$ 6,190,116
EPHRATA	2,600	\$ 6,334,666
WEST VALLEY (SPK)	3,461	\$ 6,505,110
MONROE	6,267	\$ 6,667,597
ROYAL	1,788	\$ 6,824,567
EAST VALLEY (YAK)	3,182	\$ 6,892,491
NORTH MASON	2,263	\$ 6,924,058
COLVILLE	1,588	\$ 7,030,680
ISSAQUAH	20,328	\$ 7,102,649
OMAK	8,515	\$ 7,139,898
WAHLUKE	2,560	\$ 7,256,121
HOQUIAM	1,583	\$ 7,288,749
NORTHSHORE	23,414	\$ 7,364,403
TUMWATER	6,261	\$ 7,469,206
NORTH KITSAP	5,521	\$ 7,529,034
MOUNT BAKER	1,725	\$ 7,717,046
ELLENSBURG	3,205	\$ 7,845,681
SEDRO-WOOLLEY	4,372	\$ 7,875,288
PROSSER	2,545	\$ 8,281,289
average	5,342	\$ 7,067,401

²Total ESSER Funding from OSPI "Combined ESSER Restatement"

³Enrollments from Report Card 2020-21

Appendix C. COVID-19 Costs for the 2019-20 and 2020-21 school years

DRAFT