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December 13, 2016

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WASA Statement on Inslee Budget

School superintendents applaud governor's 'bold steps' to address school funding

OLYMPIA — Bill Keim, executive director for the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), issued the following statement today regarding Gov. Jay Inslee's budget announcement, which outlined his steps to address the *McCleary* decision:

"Members of the Washington Association of School Administrators have been waiting with hope since 2012 for the school funding issues identified in the *McCleary* ruling to finally be addressed. Despite multiple court orders, including a contempt of court finding and sanctions of \$100,000 per day, the Legislature has thus far failed to address much of that ruling. Given the court's 2018 deadline, the upcoming session represents the Legislature's final chance to develop a biennial budget that addresses the ruling.

In Olympia, the budget development process always begins with the release of the governor's proposed budget. The plan just released by Gov. Inslee has taken the bold steps to reverse the decades-long decline in state support that led to the *McCleary* lawsuit. While there are important details yet to be resolved, Inslee's plan includes many elements worthy of the Legislature's support.

One of the most costly and essential aspects of Inslee's plan recognizes the importance of providing all students with effective educators. He does this first by proposing to pay market-rate salaries that will help attract our best and brightest into the profession. That is critical given the historic teacher shortage that is undermining our public schools.

Inslee also recognizes the importance of ongoing support to retain the best educators. His plan does that by providing significant time for professional training and learning, while also expanding teacher and principal mentorship programs. That support will not only improve educator effectiveness, it will also help lower the high rate of educators leaving the profession within the first five years.

The governor's proposed budget also makes important investments that may go beyond a narrow interpretation of the *McCleary* requirements. It includes significant steps to help close the achievement gap by providing additional support for struggling students. The budget also supports programs designed to better prepare Washington's students to compete for the jobs of the 21st century, including enhanced technology training.

One of the most significant aspects of Inslee's budget is that he includes a thoughtful revenue plan to support the additional funding necessary to meet the state's constitutional paramount duty. His revenue plan avoids further cuts to other essential state programs, while also making our tax system less regressive. Washington's current tax system is the most regressive in the nation, with our lowest income citizens paying twice the percentage of income as their counterparts living in Oregon.

The governor's budget is but the first step in a lengthy legislative process. Questions remain, such as the use of local levies to support educational costs that are the state's responsibility. Those issues will, hopefully, be resolved during the legislative session.

Inslee should be commended for kick-starting that conversation with a bold proposal that would improve the lives of all Washington's citizens."

About the Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA):

WASA (www.wasa-oly.org) is a non-profit organization committed to the development of quality education through professional leadership. Members benefit from a supportive community of professional leaders working to provide insightful, valuable training support, and resources. WASA also strives to sustain a positive impact on legislative and community leaders. Membership is open to education administrators in Washington state.

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