



STATE OF WASHINGTON
Office of the Governor

September 11, 2015

Dear Members of the Washington State Legislature:

I am writing today to update you on efforts to address pressing education needs in our state.

First, I am happy to let you know that we have commitments from all four caucuses to participate in a McCleary plan workgroup. We will meet on September 24 in SeaTac. The names forwarded to us by your caucuses are:

- Senators Ericksen and Rivers
- Senators Rolfes and Billig
- Representatives Sullivan and Lytton
- Representatives Magendanz and Smith

Those members will meet with me and my staff to find a plan to fulfill our constitutional obligation to adequately fund basic education and to end the Court's \$100,000-a-day contempt fine. There will be different approaches to this problem, but I expect that all members of the McCleary workgroup will share that goal.

The members of the workgroup are your voice in these talks. I urge you to reach out to your caucus representative and let your opinion be heard. It's important that members of the workgroup have the confidence of their caucuses. I don't want to set any deadlines at this point. But if the workgroup can find consensus by November 19 when the Legislature is in Olympia for Assembly Days, I will call a special session to get this work done.

Our state constitution establishes our public education system as our highest priority, and I believe developing a responsible plan to meet this duty needs to be our primary focus. There have been media reports that at least a few of you have also called for a special session to address the Supreme Court's finding that the Charter School Act, which established charter schools in our state, is unconstitutional.

Attorney General Bob Ferguson and I met this morning, and he will be filing a motion for reconsideration. The details of that motion aren't settled, but at this point we don't yet have a final decision from the Supreme Court. Since it's important that students' education not be interrupted, it is worth noting that it appears the state's existing charter schools have secured private funding to continue operating for the remainder of the school year.

I do not believe it is in the best interest of the state to call a special session to attempt to cure the constitutional concerns with the current system. I should also note that I don't believe the McCleary



workgroup is the place to debate charter schools. We must deal with the much larger financial, policy and constitutional issues surrounding McCleary.

I opposed the initiative that created charter schools because I did not believe that public money belongs in schools that lack public oversight and accountability. That remains my position. We must have accountability for all taxpayer money spent on education, particularly at a time when the Court has ruled that we have consistently failed to adequately fund public schools.

My focus will remain on basic education. Some families look to charter schools out of frustration with their local public school. The answer is to remain committed to improving our public K-12 system and making sure every child has a local public school that meets his or her needs.

As I write this letter, the state has accrued millions of dollars in fines for being in contempt of the Supreme Court's McCleary order. I've heard some say that the fines aren't much compared to the cost of funding basic education. That's true. But I believe those fines cost us in our standing with Washingtonians who expect we will support public education and live by the rule of law.

I look forward to the workgroup convening and continuing our conversations that may be difficult but must be productive.

Very truly yours,



Jay Inslee
Governor