

April 11, 2011

Dear:

Thank you for your willingness to serve in these extremely difficult financial times. In particular, we have great respect for the work that you must do this session to craft and deliver a balanced budget that meets the needs of the citizens of this state. As Trustees for the Everett School Employees Benefit Trust we are writing in regards to the proposed health care legislation (SB 5612) which requires school districts and educational service districts to purchase employee health insurance coverage through the state Health Care Authority. We urge you to continue allowing school districts the right to choose at the local level the means by which health care coverage is provided

For over 25 years, the employees of Everett Public Schools have managed a VEBA Trust which provides for local management of our health care benefits along with other related benefits such as: disability, supplemental life insurance, long-term care, employee assistance and wellness programs. All of which contribute to the overall employees well-being. The Trust has been a long-term example of successful collaboration between the Everett Education Association and the Everett School District and serves classified, certificated and administrative employee groups – all with the same options for coverage. The Trust has been able to be responsive to employee interests and to provide a range of medical and dental options in particular that meet the various needs of our individual employees. In the last several years, the Trust has recognized and placed a strong emphasis on employee and related dependent wellness and now provides a best practices, comprehensive Wellness program. This program has made a significant difference in employee health, morale and ultimately in serving our students.

As a result, a large number of our employees understand the direct correlation between their own and their colleagues' personal health conditions and the ability to control health care costs. The State's management of the health care program will reduce the personal connection our employees have with their health care and the impact that they can personally make on containing costs. For our employees we believe that this will be a step backwards in health care management and direction. What will be the incentive to engage in healthy life style choices individually and collectively?

You will find two documents attached for your further information. The first is a summary of the Trust's history and the second is a description of the Trusts' employee Wellness program; which has been the subject of multiple presentations around the state the last couple of years. Also, for your information, the six Trustees serve as volunteers on the Trust board. As volunteers, we proudly serve as we believe that this is an effective model in our community to provide our employees their benefits. The Trust annually evaluates its offerings and compares plans to both the State's PEBB plans and those offered by WEA. After such examination, we believe that what and how we provide benefits is cost effective for our employees.

In closing, if there is a decision to form a task force to review future directions and options for Washington's education employees, we very much would like to be a part of the conversation and review process. We believe our experiences would be valuable in the conversations and analysis in examining alternatives for offering health care benefits. Again, we urge you to continue allowing school districts the right to choose at the local level the means by which health care coverage is provided.

Sincerely,

Everett School Employees Benefit Trustees

Attachment: