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\*Board as of January 1, 2009

**Making Washington  
the Healthiest State  
in the Nation**

The Honorable Rosemary McAuliffe, Chair  
Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee  
464 J.A. Cherberg Building  
P.O. Box 40466  
Olympia, WA 98504-0466

Dear Senator McAuliffe,

This is to request that you delay implementation of the health related provisions (see the attached list) of SB 5880, 5889 and 5890 until July 2010 or longer, and that you include in the bills an authorization to the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Governor's Office or any other entity you choose to recommend an alternative approach to school health issues. We believe there may be merit to moving away from the patchwork approach to school health represented by these largely unfunded mandates. However, in the absence of alternatives, the repeals and modifications in these bills threaten the health and safety of school-aged children, and will undermine efforts to close the achievement gap.

It is widely known that improving student health leads to greater academic achievement, and that higher educational attainment leads to greater lifelong health. Please see the attached summary of public testimony to the Basic Education Financing Task Force from Dr. Julia Dille for more information on this research. Because both academic achievement and health status in Washington vary significantly by income, gender, race and ethnicity, on-time high school graduation rates are half of the state average in some groups. As a result, our Healthiest State Campaign includes high school graduation as a key health measure, and closing the achievement gap is among our top legislative priorities.

We have been encouraging schools to implement the Coordinated School Health Model, developed by the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. It involves more systematic and effective attention to issues addressed in many state health mandates. To learn more about the CSH Model visit <http://www.cdc.gov/HealthyYouth/CSHP/>. The primary barriers we have observed are lapses in school/community service coordination, shortages in school funding for nurses, counselors and other health related staffing, equipment and supplies, and unclear accountability for school health investments. We believe these issues are addressed in the CSH Model and in the recommendations of the Basic Education Financing Task Force.

Delaying the effective date of the health related provisions of SB 5880, 5889 and 5890 until they are assessed in light of the potential of improved school/community coordination and medium term improvements in funding for basic education can work towards improving perhaps the most important single life long health protective factor—educational attainment.

Sincerely,

Greg Vigdor, President & CEO  
Washington Health Foundation  
Healthiest Sate Campaign

CC: Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee  
Sandi Swarthout, Capitol Connection  
Robin Arnold-Williams, Director of Governor Gregoire's Policy Office