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January 22, 2019

The Honorable Members of the Washington State House of Representatives
The Honorable Members of the Washington State Senate
Washington Legislative Building
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Re: Joint Statement in Support of SEBB Implementation and Funding

Dear Senators and Representatives:

The undersigned organizations urge the Legislature to approve and fund the tentative agreement for School Employees Health Care Funding.

After decades of debate, the 2017 Legislature enacted a School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB) to provide health care and other benefits to school employees through the state, beginning in January 2020. This move was made to provide greater equity among school and state employee benefits, while also allowing school employees a voice in developing this new system. Legislation in 2018 reiterated the Legislature’s intent to provide parity among state and school employees and recognized the need to fund school benefits based on eligible individuals rather than full-time equivalent staff.

Since the SEBB was enacted, the School Employee Benefits Board has been established, benefit plans are under development, and a coalition of labor organizations has successfully negotiated a tentative agreement with the State of Washington. The coalition included the Washington Education Association, AFT Washington, SEIU 1948 - Public School Employees of Washington, SEIU 925, Teamsters Joint Council 28, IUOE 609, IUOE 286, IUOE 280, and a representative from the Association of Washington School Principals. Combined, these organizations represent over 98% of the nearly 140,000 employees within the school benefit program employers.

SEBB implementation under the terms of this contract will be a game-changer for many school employees, especially those who work part time or cover their family members. Because of the differences in funding levels and structures, school employees who work part time or who cover family members have historically paid much higher premiums than state employees or elected officials in similar circumstances. Many of our lower wage workers and part time workers have had to spend a thousand dollars a month or more for health benefits – in some cases

spending nearly all of their paycheck for benefits. The changes in this tentative agreement will save these families hundreds of dollars per month and allow them access to much more affordable family coverage

The agreement has been funded in the Governor's Budget. The final step is for the Legislature to approve funding of the agreement. Having access to affordable and quality health care is something that all school employees want and deserve. Funding the SEBB agreement will make that possible. It is time to put decades of debate to rest and implement the SEBB for the school employees and their families.

Respectfully,

Washington Education Association
Public School Employees of Washington
Operating Engineers, Local 609
American Federation of Teachers of Washington
Teamsters, Joint Council 28
SEIU, Local 925
Association of Washington School Principals