

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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**Local Labor Organizations Call on Superintendents and School Board members to
Act in Best Interest of Public Health**

Given the recent announcement that schools in our community need to begin contingency planning to close in an effort to respond to the COVID-19 emergency, we call on Superintendents and School Board members in King, Pierce and Snohomish Counties to act swiftly in the interest of student safety and wellbeing. We ask for compliance with closure, if and when directed by public health officials to do so, with abundant communication to impacted students, families, and staff; and that in the event of closures, districts pursue reopening facilities as a primary option with all medically-safe employees staying on the job as community resources for our kids.

While it may be necessary to pause school operations, we cannot leave a void for students and their families, or for healthcare and public safety workers who need to be on the front lines. Our public schools are an essential community asset—in this emergency they will remain a critical point of community resources that need to be available to students and our healthcare delivery system.

By adopting a ‘community resource’ model during this emergency we can meet several core needs, ensuring that:

- Kids have a safe and healthy place during this emergency. While they will not get the full benefit of a school day, they will maintain relationships with their educators and peers, and maintain access to learning resources essential for their growth;
- Parents who are vital workers in other industries like healthcare and public response can be at work; and
- Disruption to the education workforce is minimized, while the most vulnerable members of this workforce are on paid leave for safety.

We recognize that some places will need flexibility and alternative approaches. In all scenarios it is essential that public health guidance is paramount and local collective bargaining representatives be heard from on the impacts to students and families. While the coming days may bring many unanticipated changes, workers must be kept whole throughout so that they can remain dedicated education professionals now and into the future. The advancements we have all worked so hard to achieve in recent years must be secured by taking care of our students and educators in this time of emergency.

Finally, as part of consideration as to what flexibility may mean, we should recognize that in this emerging response critical workers may be called to work long, unpredictable hours that may require additional evening and weekend hours.

We thank Superintendents and School Board members for their commitment to our students and our educator workforce. Their partnership with our local educators and our public health delivery system is vital in the coming days.

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About SEIU Healthcare 1199NW

SEIU Healthcare 1199NW is a union of nurses and healthcare workers with over 30,000 caregivers throughout hospitals, clinics, mental health, skilled home health and hospice programs in Washington state and Montana. SEIU Healthcare 1199NW's mission is to advocate for quality care and good jobs for all.

About SEIU 925

SEIU 925 unites 17,000 people in Washington who work in education from early learning through higher education, as well as members who work in local government and nonprofits. We work together to provide quality education for children and students, to ensure that education remains a state priority, and to strengthen our workforce. We provide quality public services to our communities across the state.

About WSNA

WSNA is the leading voice and advocate for nurses in Washington state, providing representation, education and resources that allow nurses to reach their full professional potential and focus on caring for patients. WSNA represents more than 17,000 registered nurses for collective bargaining who provide care in hospitals, clinics, schools and community and public health settings across the state.

About UFCW 21

UFCW 21 is working to build a powerful union that fights for economic, political and social justice in our workplaces and our communities. We represent over 45,000 workers in retail, grocery stores, health care, and other industries in Washington state.

About Public School Employees of Washington

Public School Employees of Washington (PSE) is a labor union dedicated exclusively to representing Education Support Professionals in Washington state's public education system. Our 30,000 members play a vital role in the operation of early learning, K-12 and universities throughout the state.