



# PSE SEIU LOCAL 1948

## 2025 LEGISLATIVE PLATFORM

Public School Employees of Washington (PSE SEIU 1948) represents 32,000 workers in public schools and at three regional universities. PSE members include paraeducators, bus drivers, office staff, custodial, maintenance and grounds employees, cooks and kitchen workers, health, library, and technical services, classified and exempt university staff, and many others who provide critical student services and supports.

The 2025 Legislative Session opens against one of the most significant economic challenges in recent memory. The latest economic forecasts predict a budget deficit of \$10-12 billion due to lower-than-expected state revenue, increased costs, and rising demand for services.

At the same time, most school districts across the state are facing financial difficulties. In fact, more districts are under state financial oversight than at any point in Washington's history. The Seattle Times recently highlighted the strain on public schools, noting:

*"As districts cope with rising inflation and dwindling enrollment, many across the state are tightening their purse strings. Seattle and several other districts in the Puget Sound region are mulling emotional decisions about which schools to close. Across the state, many are also laying off staff. According to state officials, more districts than ever before are now considered to be at risk financially."*

An October survey by the Times found that most Washingtonians believe schools should receive a significant increase in funding.

### **PSE'S CALL TO ACTION**

PSE believes lawmakers must prioritize public education in their deliberations over the state operating budget. While difficult decisions are necessary to balance the budget, education should not bear the brunt of additional cuts.

### **ESP Compensation**

Thousands of school workers are struggling to make ends meet due to Washington's failure to provide living wages for these essential employees. This makes it increasingly difficult for districts to retain and attract quality staff. Meanwhile, similar hourly workers across Washington have seen greater wage growth, with increases in the state minimum wage outpacing funding increases for school worker wages.

PSE fully supports Supt. Reykdal's plan to phase in wage increases for K-12 classified staff over four years, ensuring meaningful pay raises for all school workers.

Additionally, PSE calls on the Legislature to ratify and fully fund higher education collective bargaining agreements for classified staff at CWU and WWU, which include modest wage increases for staff vital to university operations and student academic support.



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## Health Care

PSE will continue to advocate for affordable, consistent healthcare and employee voice in the governance of statewide employee health programs. This includes ratifying and fully funding the School Employees Benefits Board (SEBB) and Public Employees Benefits Board (PEBB) collective bargaining agreements to preserve affordable healthcare for educators.

We will also closely monitor any proposed consolidation of SEBB and PEBB insurance programs to ensure classified education support professionals maintain strong representation at the state level in any governance restructuring.



## Ample Support for K-12 Basic Education

The McCleary court ruling was intended to address the chronic underfunding of public schools, but many districts still face severe financial challenges. As the Seattle Times editorialized, Washington schools are under intense pressure: “(A)t this point in history, our schools have so many forces pulling on them that we have reached the breaking point with our students suffering as a result.”

PSE advocates for a complete overhaul of the prototypical funding model and a more equitable approach to addressing growing student needs. We also support Governor-elect Bob Ferguson’s call for K-12 education to once again comprise at least half of the state’s operating budget.



## 100% Support for Regional Universities

Washington’s state universities have long been underfunded. PSE is partnering with regional university administrations to eliminate the current “fund-split” system, where institutions must use tuition revenue to cover a portion of employee cost-of-living compensation increases.

PSE also urges the Legislature to explore regionalized cost-of-living adjustments for university staff, similar to those used in the K-12 system. College towns typically have higher living costs, making it harder for university employees to afford to live in or near the communities they serve.



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## Adequate, Balanced Revenue System

Maintaining and expanding support for public education will likely require additional state revenue. PSE is prepared to advocate for revenue increases specifically aimed at investing in education. We also support efforts to reform Washington's tax code to ensure the wealthy pay their fair share.

## Preserving Essential Education Programs

Washington faces a potential \$12 billion state budget shortfall over the next four years, driven by rising costs and declining revenue. Additionally, a new federal administration or Congress may reduce or eliminate education funding.

In this challenging environment, PSE will defend educational programs that fall outside the state's Basic Education protections under the Constitution.

**PSE is committed to ensuring public education remains a priority in these difficult economic times, advocating for the funding and support our schools and university staff and students desperately need.**



To stay updated and follow along during the 2025 Legislative Session, check out the Legislative Updates page in your Member Portal. PSE's Government Relations Director and our 2025 Legislative Interns will be posting updates on relevant bills and our progress towards reaching our legislative goals throughout the session.

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