



February 4, 2016

Dear WSSDA Members,

I am writing to you today to shine a light on a fast approaching emergency in public education and the overall financial funding our districts use to operate.

Due to the fact that full funding of the *McCleary* decision continues to be a secondary thought to most state legislators, districts face a huge potential financial loss known as the “levy cliff”.

Over the years, the state has deferred responsibility to fully fund public education and has put that burden on the local taxpayer in the form of “local levies.” Originally established to fund the “extras” and “to allow more course offerings” within local districts, levies have become a major funding source for local districts, continuing to supplement the basic education budget.

As the state continued to shirk its duty to amply fund districts, legislators relied on raising the local levy lid to achieve the necessary funding.

As the 2018 deadline for full compliance with *McCleary* rapidly approaches, the Legislature must significantly ramp up its investment in the paramount duty of our state. Although WSSDA does not support local levies to fund the basic education budget, our membership *does support* levy reform that includes a “safe-harbor” period. This would help make sure districts are not harmed financially during the transition away from local funding for basic education.

If the levy cliff is not addressed this legislative session, many districts around our great state will be forced to distribute “pink slips” to personnel or make drastic budget cuts in spring 2017 to address this crisis. This would likely have to come prior to the close of the 2017 legislative session in anticipation of the 2017-2018 school year.

Please discuss this with your superintendent to learn about the potential impact that the “levy cliff” will cause within your district.

In addition, I hope that you would be willing to reach out to your local legislative representatives to discuss this crisis. It is important to share the impacts that a delay in addressing the “levy cliff” will cause to your students and community, and why it is essential that action be taken *this session* to provide a year of safe-harbor.

The bills in play this session include:

- HB 2698/SB 6353 companion bills advocating for a one-year delay in the levy lid reductions
- SB 6183 advocating for a four-year delay with a gradual phase back to levy lid reductions

Please urge your legislators to support legislation or other provisions to protect school districts from falling over the “levy cliff.”

We prefer that, at a minimum, the current sunset of local levy lid and Local Effort Assistance increases be extended by two years. This would allow stability in school district budgets. It would help school districts meet their financial obligations while waiting for the Legislature to address levy reform and fully fund basic education and employee compensation. However, we support any of the three bills in play. Anything that can pass the legislature on this topic is critical.

Now is our time to make a difference in the lives of our young people. Let us work together and achieve this goal.

Respectfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chris Nation". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

**Chris Nation**

**WSSDA President**

**Board Member**

**Marysville School District #25**