

June 24, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

I write on behalf of Washington Autism Alliance & Advocacy (WAAA), a nonprofit organization supporting educational and other services for students with disabilities. I am requesting your immediate help with releasing \$21.2 million in federal CARES¹ Act funds to the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). For reasons that are unclear, your budget office² has withheld OSPI's 10 percent share of the \$216 million in K-12 emergency relief³ awarded to Washington. That money is urgently needed by students with autism and other disabilities, who were especially hard hit by the three-month school closure. Most of these students had little if any specially designed instruction to meet their unique learning needs from March to June. Many students with disabilities were unable to benefit from the minimal (largely self-directed) online learning opportunities offered during the closure. In order to stop regressing educationally and emotionally, students with disabilities need compensatory services over the summer. They also need much better planning and leadership at the state level *before* the 2020-21 school year begins, so that their learning needs will not fall victim to the health crisis again.

As it is, 90 percent of the CARES education money is going directly to school districts with virtually no state oversight. There is no assurance that special education will be prioritized or even addressed at the local level. To date, we are unaware of any school districts proactively offering compensatory services to students with disabilities over the summer. OSPI has the authority to require such services and is the primary source of guidance for educating Washington students during the pandemic. In requesting the \$21 million in CARES education funds, OSPI has prioritized relief for those furthest from educational justice, including students with disabilities.

The loss of special education and related services has strained students and their families to the breaking point. Please invest in state-driven solutions by immediately releasing the \$21 million in CARES education funds requested by OSPI. Thanks for your consideration.

¹ Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security

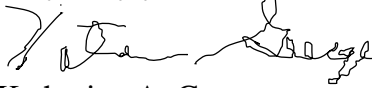
² Office of Financial Management

³ Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief

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Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Katherine A. George". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "K".

Katherine A. George, attorney at law

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Arzu Forough". The signature is cursive and stylized.

Arzu Forough, President/CEO Washington Autism Alliance & Advocacy

cc Maddy Thompson, senior policy adviser
David Postman, chief of staff
Kelly Wicker, deputy chief of staff
David Schumacher, director of financial management