



STATE OF WASHINGTON
WASHINGTON STATE BOARD OF HEALTH

PO Box 47990 • Olympia, Washington 98504-7990

October 26, 2023

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Washington State Governor
Post Office Box 40002
Olympia, Washington 98504-0002

Sent via email

Dear Governor Inslee:

I am writing to urge you to support and include in your 2024 Supplemental Budget the Environmental Justice Council (Council) [2024 Climate Commitment Act funding recommendations](#) that relate to school environmental justice. The Council recommends removing the budget proviso that blocks revision and implementation of the school environmental health and safety rules, and endorses recommendations from the [Board's 2022 State Health Report](#), related to making school environments healthy and safe.

Council staff approached Board staff in August, inquiring about the status of the longstanding budget proviso that has suspended implementation of the rules since 2010, and specifically asked what resources might be needed in order to lift the budget proviso. This discussion informed the Council's recommendations which specifically call out:

- Funding for local health jurisdictions to stand up environmental health and safety programs to assess and inspect schools and help schools identify, prioritize and address environmental public health risks.
- Directing the Department of Health to work with local health jurisdictions, Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, and the State Board of Health to conduct a school environmental health and safety review and needs assessment, including existing inequities to inform updates to the K-12 School Health and Safety Guide and future rulemaking and to prioritize schools in need of repair or replacement that serve overburdened communities.
- Funding K-12 school heating, ventilation and air conditioning system maintenance and necessary upgrades, particularly for schools in overburdened communities.
- Funding the State Board of Health to develop cross-disciplinary partnerships to review the current and school rules and make recommendations for next steps.

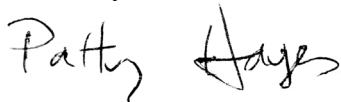
Local environmental public health professionals are uniquely qualified and play a critical role in helping identify risks, potential problems, and strategies for improving health and

safety in schools. Regular health and safety inspections can help identify air quality issues and other hazards to help prevent illness and injury. Indoor air quality is a key factor in student health and performance, but schools may not have access to adequate resources to immediately fix or address the structural or environmental issues that lead to poor indoor air quality. The pandemic highlighted the critical importance of public health and school officials working together to improve ventilation to reduce the transmission and spread of respiratory illness.

The suspension of rule implementation has been included in each state operating budget since the 2009- 2011 biennium. With the budget proviso in place, the Board can neither implement the 2009 rules, nor can it update these rules to address environmental health factors such as indoor air quality, climate change, and more, with the most up-to-date science. The proviso also prevents the Board from revising the rules to align with changes to state law, including changes needed to comply with school drinking water testing requirements.

The Council's budget recommendations provide a significant opportunity to enable schools to improve environmental health and safety for the students that they serve, particularly for those schools that have serve children in overburdened communities. The Board urges you to include these recommendations in your proposed 2024 Supplemental Budget. The Board stands ready to assist with further information as discussion occurs on this important topic.

Sincerely,



Patty Hayes,
Chair

cc: Dave Schumacher
Maria Batayola
The Honorable Jarred-Michael Erickson
Kelly Wicker
Rob Duff
Jim Cahill
Pat Sullivan
Anna Lising
Kelsey Rote
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Becky Kelley
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