



LAIRD NORTON  
COMPANY LLC

Rep. Sharon Tomiko Santos  
Chair - House Education Committee  
PO Box 40600  
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Dear Representative Santos and House Education Committee Members:

In response to the passage of SB 6552 and the house education committee's consideration of this bill on Monday, February 24, I am again writing you to express my unwavering support for legislative action to implement the State Board of Education's recommended 24-credit college and career readiness high school diploma. As former chair and member of the State Board of Education for nearly a decade, chair of the Washington Roundtable's Education Committee, and President of the Partnership for Learning's Board, this letter documents my support for SB 6552.

Earning a high school diploma signifies that a student is prepared for the next phase of his/her life – be it college or career. The graduation requirements that students achieve in order to earn a high school diploma must reflect the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills and knowledge that will be required of all students – regardless of his/her post-secondary pathway.

The State Board of Education has spent significant time over the last five years researching and discussing which skills and knowledge they believe all students must possess before graduating from high school. Their recommendations are outlined in the "Washington State Career and College-Ready Graduation Requirements" – a set of 24-credits that the State Board believes will prepare all students for post-secondary education, gainful employment and citizenship. This 24-credit high school diploma is included in the definition of basic education and its funding was included in the biennial budget approved in 2013. The Partnership and Roundtable support the State Board's 24-credit diploma and the flexibility the State Board has built into the requirements to provide students the opportunity to engage in technology and arts courses as they choose their future paths in life.

Research done by the Washington Roundtable last spring indicates that the skills gap in Washington state is significant and growing. Currently, Washington has 25,000 "acute" job openings (jobs that have been unfilled for at least three months) and by 2017 this number is to grow to 50,000. This skills gap provides clear evidence of the importance of students leaving high school with a meaningful diploma - one that will prepare them for life beyond high school.

As Washington continues to invest hundreds of millions of dollars into education, the Partnership and Roundtable recognize that our work is not done until all students, including our struggling students, make it to the finish and graduate prepared for career and college.

Please join me, the State Board of Education, Washington Roundtable members, and the Partnership for Learning in supporting 6552 and its focus on implementing the 24-credit high school diploma. It's vital that we put Washington students on a level playing field with students in other states and allow Washington employers to remain competitive.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jeff Vincent", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Jeff Vincent President & CEO



