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Rep. Steve Bergquist
2025-2026 Legislative Update
11th LEGISLATIVE DISTRICT

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Rep. Steve Bergquist • 11th District

2025-2026 Legislative Update



Dear Friends and Neighbors,

As an educator in the Renton School District for over 20 years and as Chair of the House Early Learning and Human Services Committee, it is important to me that every Washingtonian be provided with the opportunity to succeed. That commitment continues to guide my work across early learning, K-12, and higher education.

2025–2026 Legislative Progress

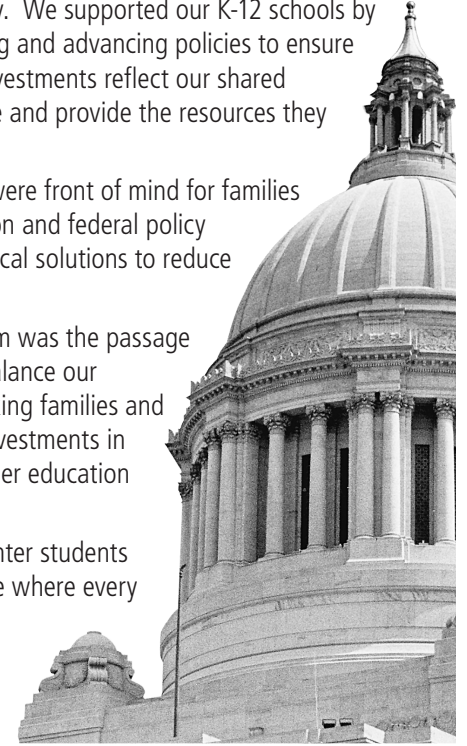
Over the past two sessions, we have navigated real fiscal and economic challenges while staying focused on stability, equity, and long-term opportunities for Washington families.

In 2025, we entered session facing a significant budget shortfall. In response, we took a balanced, disciplined approach protecting essential services while making strategic adjustments to ensure long-term sustainability. We supported our K-12 schools by removing the cap on special education funding and advancing policies to ensure students learn in safe environments. These investments reflect our shared responsibility to meet students where they are and provide the resources they need to succeed.

In 2026, affordability and economic security were front of mind for families across our state. Rising costs driven by inflation and federal policy decisions required a continued focus on practical solutions to reduce those financial pressures.

A key step toward a more equitable tax system was the passage of the Millionaires' Tax. This reform helps rebalance our regressive tax structure, reduce costs for working families and small businesses, as well as funding critical investments in k-12 education, child care, early learning, higher education and healthcare.

While challenges remain, I will continue to center students and families in every decision building a future where every child can have the opportunity to succeed.



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Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program & Head Start

The Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and Head Start provide free, comprehensive preschool services to eligible three- and four-year-olds from low-income families or with developmental needs, supporting the whole child through early learning, health services, nutrition, and family engagement to ensure strong kindergarten readiness. You can learn more and check eligibility at <https://www.dcyf.wa.gov/services/earlylearning-childcare/eceap-headstart>.

Education Update: Elevating Excellence in Public Education

Building on this foundation, this year, the Legislature established the PreK Promise Account (**HB 2159/SB 5872**), a public-private partnership that expands access to high-quality preschool by leveraging a major commitment (up to \$2 billion over 10 years) from the Ballmer Group to fund up to 10,000 additional ECEAP slots, helping sustain progress despite budget constraints and improving access to free early learning opportunities for working families across Washington.



Special Education (SPED) Funding: We made historic progress by investing over \$775 million in special education in 2025, including removing the enrollment cap and strengthening the safety net to cover additional costs school districts incur. In 2026, we built on that commitment with an additional \$240 million to ensure districts meet the needs of every student. These investments help our schools provide inclusive, high-quality education and ensure students with disabilities receive the individualized support they deserve.

Student Nutrition & Well-Being: We increased funding for school meals and summer food assistance programs, investing \$45 million to combat student hunger in 2025, and \$140 million in 2026. This is a critical investment in both student health and academic success.

Support for School District Costs: Recognizing rising expenses, we increased funding for materials, supplies, and operating costs (MSOC) by \$215 million. In combination with a bill I sponsored (**HB 2049**), which increases the maximum per-pupil limit for local school enrichment levies, allowing our school districts the opportunity to stabilize their budgets and ensure equitable access to essential classroom resources across communities.

Tukwila & Renton Promise

The Tukwila and Renton Promise Programs provide free community college for all of our local high school graduates from the Tukwila and Renton School Districts. The promise programs continue to build strong momentum with enrollment more than tripling last year in our first year of the Tukwila Promise. Students are increasingly pursuing pathways in high-demand fields that lead directly to family-wage careers and meet regional workforce needs.

At the state level, I was proud to sponsor **House Bill 1587**, which strengthens these local Promise programs by aligning them with the Washington State Opportunity Scholarship. This reduces administrative barriers, expands access, and matches local government support with state investment to more effectively support student success with free access to community college.

Looking ahead, I am hopeful we can build on this model to establish a Kent Promise Program, expanding these opportunities to even more students across our region. Last session brought important updates to our state's financial aid programs, strengthening access and affordability for Washington students. Under past law, students from households earning up to 55% of median family income (MFI) were eligible for the full Washington College Grant, so we expanded eligibility for students at 60% MFI now, to also receive the maximum award for all four years of college. For the 2026-27 school year, a family of four earning up to \$80,000 per year would have tuition at a public college in Washington fully covered. The data below shows the 2025-26 school year which will increase with inflation for the 2026-27 school year.

Higher Education: Washington College Grant

Family Size	60%	65% (CBS Maximum)	70% (WCG only)	75% (WCG only)	100% (WCG only- Maximum)
1	\$41,000	\$44,500	\$47,500	\$51,000	\$68,000
2	\$53,500	\$58,000	\$62,500	\$67,000	\$89,000
3	\$66,000	\$71,500	\$77,000	\$82,500	\$110,000
4	\$78,500	\$85,000	\$91,500	\$98,500	\$131,000
5	\$91,000	\$99,000	\$106,500	\$114,000	\$152,000
6	\$104,000	\$112,500	\$121,000	\$129,500	\$173,000

Most importantly, we held the line on tuition to protect students and families from additional financial strain, while increasing investment in the Washington College Grant by nearly \$200 million in 2025 and an additional \$45 million in 2026, ensuring more students can pursue higher education without taking on excessive debt.

Thank you for your continued support and commitment to our community. Please reach out if you have any questions about how to access these or other state-funded programs.

Sincerely,

Rep. Steve Bergquist

