



# 2023–2024 ANNUAL REPORT

*Tibyaan, 3rd grade*



LETTER FROM OUR CEO

Dear Friend,

As we recap another remarkable year at League of Education Voters Foundation (LEV), I am filled with gratitude for the unwavering commitment of our team, partners, and stakeholders.

At LEV, we work tirelessly to create learning environments from early learning to K-12 to postsecondary education where every student feels safe, supported, and a positive sense of belonging. This mission has guided us through the past year and will continue to be our beacon in the years to come.

We are most excited about our deepening partnerships with students, families, educators, community-based organizations, policymakers, school district and state agency staff, philanthropists, and media across Washington state to advance the work. This includes continuing our robust partnership with South Shore PreK-8 in South Seattle, where innovative practices to support students and educators inform statewide policy recommendations.

Spotlighting our partnerships with youth, some examples of how LEV engages students are by interviewing them as part of our statewide Field outreach to create the annual Legislative Platform, including them as panelists in nearly every Lunchtime LEVinar, inviting them to participate in our Youth Advocacy Hub and in our Student Potential Youth Advisory Council (SPYAC) through the statewide Investing in Student Potential coalition, and by presenting a Youth Advocacy Summit each fall.

Coming soon, watch for a groundbreaking report about the state of equitable education funding in Washington, which will inform our advocacy strategy for at least the next 3-5 years.

Thank you for your continued support of LEV. As partners, you have been instrumental in shaping our journey, and I am grateful for your trust. As we move forward, let us continue to collaborate, innovate, and make a positive impact.

Together, we can build a brighter future for every student in Washington state.

Sincerely,



**Arik Korman**  
CEO  
League of Education Voters Foundation

LETTER FROM OUR BOARD CHAIR

Dear Friend,

At League of Education Voters Foundation, we value and prioritize creating authentic relationships with individuals, communities, and partners most impacted by inequalities in our education system. It’s an approach that I’m proud of, and I am honored to serve as Board Chair for LEV.

We ground our work at LEV by asking: how are students experiencing their education? Our schools, from Pre-K through higher education, should be places where every student first and foremost feels that their identities and abilities are valued, supported, and affirmed. When students are well and truly experience their education in this way, then they are better set up for academic success.

In April 2024, the LEV Board was proud to name Arik Korman as the organization’s Chief Executive Officer. Arik’s long tenure with LEV, including service on the Board and as LEV’s Director of Communications from 2015 to 2024, positions him well to lead the organization into the next phase of our work. The Board has the utmost confidence in Arik’s leadership, his vision for the organization, and his deep commitment to impactful work and strong relationships.

Leadership transitions are challenging seasons for any organization. As a Board we could not be more impressed with how the stellar staff team at LEV prioritized the work and came together to not only maintain stability, but also continued to reach towards ambitious education systems change in the face of leadership uncertainty.

The Board also extends our deep gratitude to our wide network of supporters and partners. We could not do this work and have the impact that we do without the relational, partnership, and financial investments from you. Everything we do at LEV requires collaboration, and one of our top priorities is to continue to show up in partnership with all of you.

I’m proud to be a part of this work in service to students and their families, and helping to achieve our vision to create learning environments from early learning to K-12 to postsecondary education where every student feels safe, supported, and a positive sense of belonging. Thank you for your support.

Sincerely,



**Ben Mitchell**  
Board Chair  
League of Education Voters Foundation



OUR VISION, MISSION AND VALUES

OUR VISION

Every student in Washington state has access to an excellent public education that provides equitable opportunities for success.

OUR MISSION

LEV acts to serve the interests of students and families across the state of Washington to improve education access and quality, particularly those who have been harmed by historical and systemic inequities, by:

- ▶ Developing community-informed, targeted policy solutions to benefit students impacted by racism, poverty, disability discrimination, and other forms of oppression.
- ▶ Advocating for ample, equitable, and stable resources to meet the needs of every student.
- ▶ Mobilizing families, businesses, youth, educators, communities, and other stakeholders to understand and remove the systemic barriers to each student’s success within the public education system.
- ▶ Partnering with stakeholders to advocate for equitable, high-quality, and fully-funded education.
- ▶ Highlighting research-driven and promising educational practices that prepare students to reach their full potential and contribute meaningfully to our democracy and economy.
- ▶ Providing voters, stakeholders, policymakers, and the media with strategic, accurate, and timely information about public education in Washington state.

OUR VALUES

At LEV, we base our work on the following values:

Put Students First

Students have an important voice in shaping the education system. Families are critical partners in student success. We commit to working with students, families, and communities – especially Black, Indigenous and students of color, students with disabilities, students gaining English proficiency, students who identify as LGBTQ+, students experiencing homelessness, foster youth, and other historically marginalized students — to identify barriers and formulate solutions together, and we support them in organizing to advocate for their future.

Honor Community Knowledge and Experience

LEV recognizes that communities themselves offer the best definition of the challenges they face and often the best pathways for addressing them.

Embrace Anti-Racism

We are committed to understanding and dismantling historic and systemic racism which creates stark inequities in education and being held accountable for our own action or inaction. We are also committed to looking inward at LEV’s history, committing to changes, and being accountable for them.

Operationalize Equity

We believe equity should lie at the heart of our decision-making. We must employ approaches and build structures and policies externally and internally that will be designed to embed equity at every decision point.

Advocate for Educators Who Better Reflect the Students They Serve

We believe students need teachers and school leaders who reflect them, understand their lived experiences, and are equipped to help them succeed.

OUR WORK

We advocate at the state level for community-driven, student-focused education solutions.

We build capacity for partners and coalitions by providing Policy, Field, and Communications expertise.

We share trusted information with students, families, communities, educators, partner organizations, policymakers, and the media.

We convene education stakeholders such as students, families, educators, community-based organizations, school district and state agency staff, and policymakers.

And we do this through an equity lens.

Janessa, 3rd grade

LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: CREATE SAFE AND INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

LEV’s commitment to creating safe and inclusive learning environments for all children remained strong this session, with the goal of ensuring schools are equipped with systemic, preventative supports to reduce and de-escalate students’ behavioral crises without harmful practices.

One of the most significant parts of this goal was our advocacy around **House Bill 1479**, a bill that sought to ban isolation practices in schools and significantly reduce the use of restraints of students. We know that these practices disproportionately affect students of color and students with disabilities through trauma, exclusion, and disengagement from learning and community. For the past two sessions, we have worked closely with our partners at the ACLU of Washington, Disability Rights Washington, and others to uplift the significant findings of their **report**, meet with legislators and other system actors, and mobilize broader awareness and support. Among other things, the bill grew in its emphasis on building capacity in schools through high-quality training in order to support the elimination of isolation, the reduction of restraint, and the use of alternative de-escalation practices.

This legislative session brought mixed outcomes for this priority area. Unfortunately, HB 1479 did not pass again, although it would have made significant strides by

banning isolation in younger grades as well as chemical and mechanical restraint, and it would have introduced extensive training and reporting requirements for school staff. The failure of this bill in the legislature highlights the ongoing challenges and urgency we face in protecting our most vulnerable students.

However, a slightly more positive development was the inclusion of \$5 million to continue the work of the Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network (IPTN) at the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). This program provides professional development to support teachers in adopting and implementing inclusionary practices in schools. An added focus of the work of the IPTN will include supporting schools and districts in adopting practices that work towards eliminating the use of isolation and reducing the use of restraint. LEV and partners will be working with OSPI as they design and implement their evolving work around inclusive practices and how it relates to work to end the use of isolation and significantly reduce the use of restraint in schools.

Moving forward, our advocacy will continue to focus on securing comprehensive legislative and funding support to ensure all students can thrive in safe, inclusive, and supportive school environments. We remain committed to advancing policies and practices that prioritize the well-being and success of every student.

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SAFE & INCLUSIVE LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

Xena, 6th grade



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: PROVIDE COMPREHENSIVE SUPPORTS FOR WELLNESS AND INCLUSION AT SCHOOL

Our priority area around comprehensive support for wellness and inclusion is focused on ensuring that learners and educators have access to robust mental health resources. These resources are essential for healing, growth, and thriving in a safe and inclusive school environment. Our goal is to create a foundation of safety, inclusion, and belonging for all students, particularly for those historically marginalized from school systems, including students of color, students gaining English proficiency, and students with disabilities.

To achieve these objectives, we believe we must dedicate funds to increase the number of effective mental health professionals serving students, ensure that educators also have access to mental health support, and support initiatives that help students feel represented and seen at school. Feeling valued, understood, and a positive sense of belonging is essential to emotional well-being.

This year saw a few developments connected to these goals. The continuation of funding for the Inclusionary Practices Technical Assistance Network (IPTN), while small, will support professional development for teachers to adopt more inclusive practices. Legislators also dedicated \$1.2 million to continue behavioral health regional services grants and require the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to evaluate the behavioral health support system. While these

investments are a step in the right direction, they are too small to address mental health needs in schools on a comprehensive level.

The passage of **House Bill 1956**, which mandates the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to review and update learning standards related to substance use, including opioid use education and prevention, is a positive development that LEV helped support. In addition to legislative advocacy, we presented a [LEVinar](#) about this important topic. HB 1956 will help equip students with critical knowledge about substance use, the opioid epidemic, and the relationship between substances and mental health. By integrating opioid education and prevention into the curriculum, schools can help students make informed decisions, reduce the incidence of substance addiction, and ultimately support their long-term health and safety.

LEV also supported the passage of **Senate Bill 5462**, which promotes the implementation of curricula that is diverse and inclusive of underrepresented perspectives. This bill, which the Washington state Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC) helped create, is essential for promoting a sense of belonging and validation among all students, which is especially important among widespread efforts to ban certain authors, books, and instructional materials that engage with race, LGBTQ+ perspectives, and more. When students see themselves represented in what they learn, it enhances their

engagement, boosts their self-esteem, and contributes to a positive and inclusive school climate.

Despite these advancements, the need for increased, comprehensive mental health counselors, funding, and support remains a high priority at LEV. We will continue to advocate for policies and investments that adequately meet the mental health and wellness needs, ensuring that all students and educators can thrive.



Isha, 10th grade



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: SUPPORT STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Our education system must be designed to accommodate the needs of all learners and enable each and every student to access their education, including the more than 160,000 students receiving special education services.

Washington's current approach to providing special education services leaves many students unable to truly access their education. The 2024 legislative session made a few important changes to how we serve and support students receiving special education, including taking a step toward better resourcing the special education needs of students.

Parents have the right to request due process to confirm the accuracy of special education decisions. It is a legal proceeding that ensures students with disabilities get the right support. However, in our state, the burden of proof has historically been placed on parents to prove students are not receiving the proper support, but with the passage of **Senate Bill 5883**, this responsibility shifted to the school districts. This means that school districts now have the responsibility to submit their

data and reasoning about the student's Individualized Educational Program (IEP) for review, instead of a parent. This will help address a major challenge for families, especially families with language barriers and families with fewer financial resources, who experience more barriers in successfully navigating a due process proceeding. In addition to legislative advocacy, we presented a **LEVinar** about this important topic.

This session also saw continued advocacy around increasing special education funding in Washington, specifically around the funded enrollment cap. The **funded enrollment cap** limits how many students can generate state special education funding in a district. Unfortunately, the enrollment cap remains in place, but was increased from 15% to 16% with the passage of **House Bill 2180**. We continue to see steady progress on increasing the funded enrollment cap and will continue our advocacy efforts until the arbitrary limitation on supporting the needs of students receiving special education services is completely eliminated.

The 2024 legislative session made a few important changes to how we serve and support students receiving special education, including taking a step toward better resourcing the special education needs of students.

Opinion

WA schools don't have 'bad kids.' They lack enough tools to help them

March 27, 2024 at 2:57 pm

View article

EDUCATION

Join the discussion about WA's lack of educator diversity

League of Education Voters webinar looks at solutions for a tough issue

View article

SUPPORT STUDENTS RECEIVING SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES

Demeko, 5th grade



LEGISLATIVE PRIORITY: ESTABLISH EQUITABLE FUNDING STRUCTURES

All students deserve a quality educational experience, which means creating a funding system rooted in equity for students of color, students with disabilities, students gaining English proficiency, students from low-income families, students who identify as LGBTQIA+, and students experiencing homelessness. The one-time Federal COVID recovery stimulus funding that has boosted K-12 spending by more than \$500 million a year was almost entirely spent by the end of the 2023-24 school year. Districts are making difficult budget decisions to prepare for 2024-25 to reflect the absence of these one-time funds.

The legislature didn't make any structural changes to our current approach to funding K-12 education, but they did recognize the funding challenges districts are experiencing. They proposed two ways to increase funding for schools, totaling \$115 million between the 2023-24 and 2024-25 school years. The legislature passed **Senate Bill 5882**, which increases paraeducator

and office support staff allocations, as well as **House Bill 2494**, which increases funding for a part of the funding formula that is intended to cover operating costs of schools.

In addition, this year's budget included money for charter public schools so that they can access up to \$1,550 per student in additional funding resources for the 2023-24 school year and \$1,500 per student in 2024-25. These additional resources will, in part, address the fact that these schools are not allowed to access the more than \$2,900 per student in local levy funding that many districts are able to access.

While the increases to the funding formulas take a step toward centering the needs of students in how we resource schools, the depth and breadth of inequity in our current approach remains largely intact as we move into the 2024-25 school year. LEV will continue to work with partners toward establishing state and local funding structures that are designed to support the diverse learning needs of all students.

Districts are making difficult budget decisions to prepare for 2024–25 to reflect the absence of these one-time [stimulus] funds.



ESTABLISH EQUITABLE FUNDING STRUCTURES

Harvey, 6th grade

NEWS > WASHINGTON

Should Washington's public schools ban students from using cell phones?

May 2, 2024 | Updated Thu., May 2, 2024 at 9:43 p.m.

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MENTAL HEALTH

League of Education Voters hosts school opioid crisis discussion

Free webinar brings experts to the table

[View article](#)



SOUTH SHORE

The partnership between LEV, the Opportunities for Education (OFE) Foundation, and South Shore PreK-8 continued during the 2023-2024 school year. The goal of the grant continues to focus on the well-being of students in PreK-3rd grade. Educational support, mental health support, and social-emotional learning (SEL) instruction were the primary focus for the school year.

South Shore is one of the most diverse schools in Washington state. It serves a more racially and ethnically diverse student body compared to other Seattle Public Schools (SPS) serving students from kindergarten through 8th grade. South Shore’s student population has a higher share of Black or African American students than those of other SPS schools. South Shore students who identify as Black or African American comprised 45.5 percent and Asian students comprised 16 percent of enrollment in 2022-23. Black or African American and Asian students have historically comprised the highest share of the South Shore student body compared to other races and ethnicities. Hispanic, multiracial, and white students each comprise approximately 10-15 percent of the South Shore student body in the most recent school years. In the 2022-23 school year, approximately 85 percent of South Shore students identified at Black, Indigenous, or People of Color (BIPOC) compared to 54.5 percent in other SPS schools. At South Shore, a higher share of

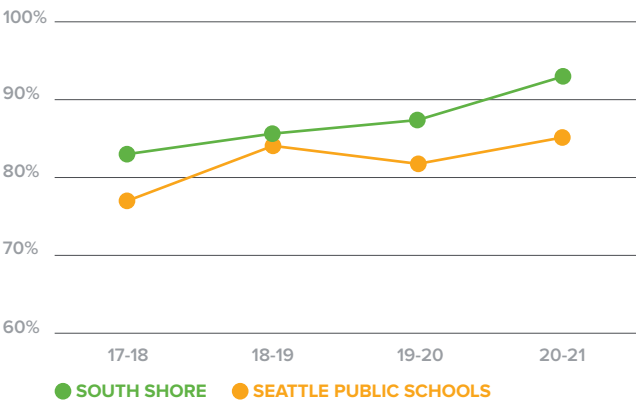
students are from non-English speaking households, are English language learners (ELL), are not US born, and identify as BIPOC. Fewer South Shore students require an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) compared to other SPS students. Because of the diversity, the focus on supporting students is paramount to student success.

One of the goals of LEV last year was to determine the efficacy of the South Shore program. To do that, LEV partnered with ECONorthwest to analyze student performance since the inception of the program.

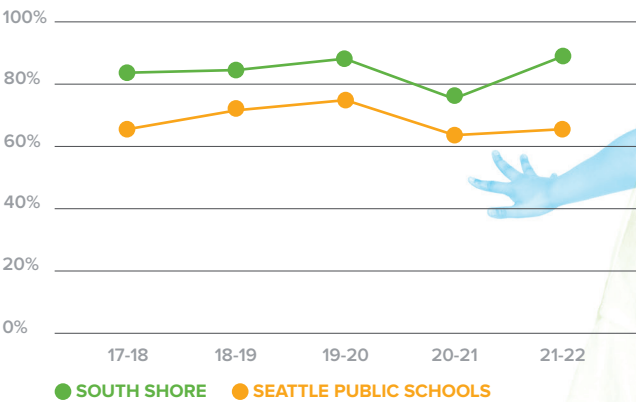
There were some key takeaways:

- ▶ The share of low-income students at South Shore increased from 67 percent in the 2018-19 school year to 70 percent, whereas at other SPS schools, the share increased from 33 to 36 percent.
- ▶ Long-term enrollment persistence for South Shore students who began in PreK shows that a large share (38 percent) of students remain through 8th grade.
- ▶ Retention rates between the 2017-18 school year to the 2022-23 school year of South Shore students were higher than or equal to the average for SPS elementary schools for PreK through 4th grade.
- ▶ At South Shore and other SPS schools, BIPOC students, apart from Asian students, are disciplined at a higher rate than white students. Overall, South Shore disciplined students at a higher rate than other SPS schools in the 2022-23 school year. However, South Shore disciplined students more equally across races and ethnicities than other SPS schools on average across the 2018-19 to 2022-23 school years. Notably,

South Shore (SSPK-8) Graduation Rates Versus Comparable SPS Schools



South Shore (SSPK-8) Retention Rate PreK-4th Grade Versus Comparable SPS Schools



SOUTH SHORE

Selah, 5th grade



Black or African American students are disciplined at a relatively lower rate, although the discipline rate for Hispanic or Latino students is relatively higher.

- ▶ South Shore’s emphasis on early education is apparent in the school’s lower student-teacher ratios in kindergarten and elementary schools compared to the rest of the district.
- ▶ South Shore students consistently graduate on-time at higher rates than SPS students at comparable schools.

While much of the data and trends were good, the school, with LEV and OFE’s support, will continue to work on student performance in the areas of English Language Arts and Math. Another thing that LEV determined, based on the ECONorthwest report, was the importance of mental health and SEL supports for district-wide and statewide implementation. The work being done at South Shore demonstrates the necessity of focusing on student physical and mental well-being. The retention data and completion data demonstrate that the “South Shore Effect” makes a difference in overall outcomes. This work has allowed LEV to share outcomes with the goal of implementation for all of Washington’s students. LEV’s work on specific bills related to student mental health came in direct response to the successes seen at South Shore.



Soliyana, 3rd grade

Education | Education Lab | Local News | Local Politics | Northwest

**Pandemic still at forefront of WA state schools superintendent race**

May 1, 2024 at 6:00 am | Updated May 1, 2024 at 6:00 am

[View article](#)

## YOUTH ADVOCACY: YOUTH ADVOCACY SUMMIT OCTOBER 2023

### A UNIQUE APPROACH TO EMPOWERING YOUTH ADVOCACY

The inaugural Youth Advocacy Summit & Fall Fest, a collaboration between LEV and the Community Center for Education Results (CCER), celebrated youth advocacy and laid a foundation for future change. Partnering



with youth from various organizations, including the Washington state Legislative Youth Advisory Council (LYAC), Choose 180 Youth & Young Adult Advocacy program, and King County Play Equity Coalition Youth Action Team, this diverse team co-designed the event, emphasizing authenticity, vulnerability, and creativity.



### CONNECTING AND LEARNING THROUGH WORKSHOPS

Workshops led by youth and experts allowed attendees to tailor their experience at the event. Student Leigh Howard led a workshop on sexual assault awareness, while LEV School Transformation Partner Jennifer Putman facilitated a discussion on Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) and social-emotional learning. Speak With Purpose conducted a session on writing and delivering a passion piece. Topics covered



included mental health, climate change, and identity exploration, fostering valuable learning opportunities and connections among attendees.

### ADVOCACY THROUGH PERFORMANCE AND SELF-EXPRESSION

The event featured a performance space to allow youth and adults to express themselves and engage with advocacy. Former South Shore PreK-8 student Rahma Mohammed performed her piece “**Bang Bang**,” highlighting the impact of gun violence on students.



**Blaire Penry**, 2024 Washington state Teacher of the Year, emphasized the significance of youth voice and leadership. Participants also got to explore booths of other organizations like the King County Library System and NAMI Seattle, which engaged participants in projects focused on freedom and mental health, respectively.

YOUTH-LED PANEL CONVERSATION WITH ELECTED OFFICIALS

A highlight of the event was a **panel discussion** featuring youth advocates and elected officials, including Washington state Senator Claire Wilson and Seattle School Board President Liza Rankin. Youth advocates Sophia Sekits, Aliyah Banks, and Rahma Mohammed discussed their advocacy experiences and



the impact of youth voices on policy changes. Senator Wilson highlighted the significant contributions of youth to legislative initiatives like student voting rights

and comprehensive sex education, emphasizing the importance of including youth in advocacy work.



A VALUABLE EXPERIENCE AND BLUEPRINT FOR THE FUTURE

The Youth Advocacy Summit fostered collaboration among passionate individuals and organizations, and the involvement of elected officials demonstrated a genuine commitment to youth advocacy, as well. The connections made during the event will continue to impact the education and advocacy space, and we are excited about the possibilities they represent. This Summit showcased the potential for youth advocacy to shape policies and create meaningful change. We are committed to carrying this momentum forward and look forward to future support and collaboration in this movement. The 2024 Youth Advocacy Summit is scheduled to take place on October 26 at the Renton Pavilion Events Center.

YOUTH ADVOCACY: SPYAC PROGRAM

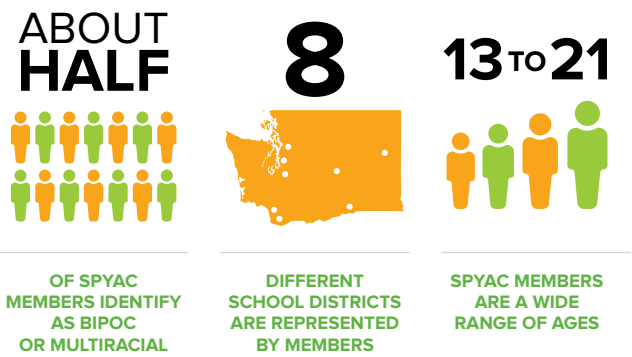
The **Student Potential Youth Advisory Council** (SPYAC) began its second year this past fall, establishing itself as a vibrant community of young leaders and an impactful advocacy training experience for students with disabilities across Washington.

SPYAC’S MISSION AND ROLE IN ADVOCACY WORK

SPYAC’s mission is to empower its youth members by providing tools and platforms to develop leadership skills, build meaningful connections, and influence education in Washington. The program fosters a mutually beneficial relationship between students and the LEV-led **Investing in Student Potential** (ISP) coalition. Students share their school experiences and ideas while gaining policy knowledge, skill training, and compensation, ensuring they play active roles within the broader advocacy coalition.

LEARNING AND ENGAGING IN THE LEGISLATIVE SESSION

One of the ways students played an active role in the coalition this past year was by co-developing a



**legislative platform** leading into the 2024 legislative session. They identified key education advocacy issues such as safety, inclusion, equitable funding, and respect in schools. During the session, students learned about the legislative process, crafted elevator pitches, and engaged with weekly newsletters from LEV’s policy experts, allowing them to stay updated and participate in public hearings if they chose.

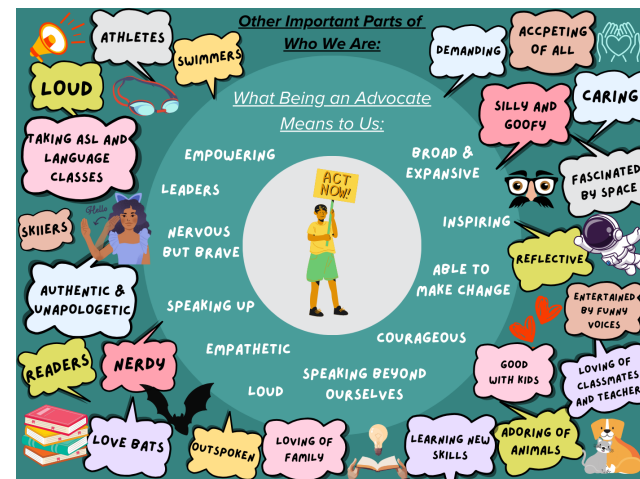
WRITING, CREATING, AND STORYTELLING

SPYAC made particular use of LEV’s **Youth Advocacy Hub** this year, which helped students understand legislative bills and processes. They also contributed to the **Youth Education Advocates Series** blog, gaining experience in storytelling and amplifying their voices on critical issues. Highlights include a co-created collage on identity and a blog post discussing the impact of delayed IEP and 504 processes.

EXPANDING BEYOND THE LEGISLATURE

In its final months, SPYAC broadened its advocacy efforts. Students participated in Q&A sessions with educational leaders, including a school board member





## RISING VOICES—THE SPYAC ADVOCACY BLOG SERIES

**By Abigail P.**

Over the course of the 2024 legislative session, SPYAC members created blog content as a way to advocate for special education and other issues that matter to them. Through this blog series, the coalition is sharing their work and uplifting their important perspectives on school, disability, our education system, and more because we believe youth are experts in their own experiences.

and a principal, and recorded a webinar-style student panel. They also produced a video as an open letter to school leaders, sharing their experiences and insights.

## CELEBRATING SUCCESSES AND LOOKING AHEAD

Over the past year, SPYAC members have enhanced their advocacy and leadership skills, fostering confidence, and raising awareness for inclusive education. These experiences will benefit them in

college and employment opportunities and provide them with tangible work products such as published articles and public speaking videos.

Looking ahead, SPYAC remains committed to supporting and including all students in Washington's educational system. The program's growth over the past year has strengthened its foundation, and we are excited about the possibilities ahead. We look forward to continuing our mission and uplifting the voices of students with disabilities in the advocacy space.



Lake, 3rd grade

## YOUTH ADVOCACY: SPYAC STUDENT PROFILE

**JULIAN GONZALEZ**

**Age:** 19

**School:** Wenatchee Valley Community Transitions  
(a community based, vocational training program for students who are 18-21 years old, have completed 4 years of high school, and have chosen to remain in school to receive instruction in vocational training, self-advocacy, community mobility and connections, functional daily living skills, and functional academics)

**Graduation Year:** 2027

**How would you describe yourself?**

I am kind, thoughtful, loving, creative and I have a huge imagination!

**What does it mean to be an “advocate” to you?**

It means I can ask for help when I need it. I can share my feelings with others.

**How did you learn about SPYAC? What has your experience in SPYAC been like?**

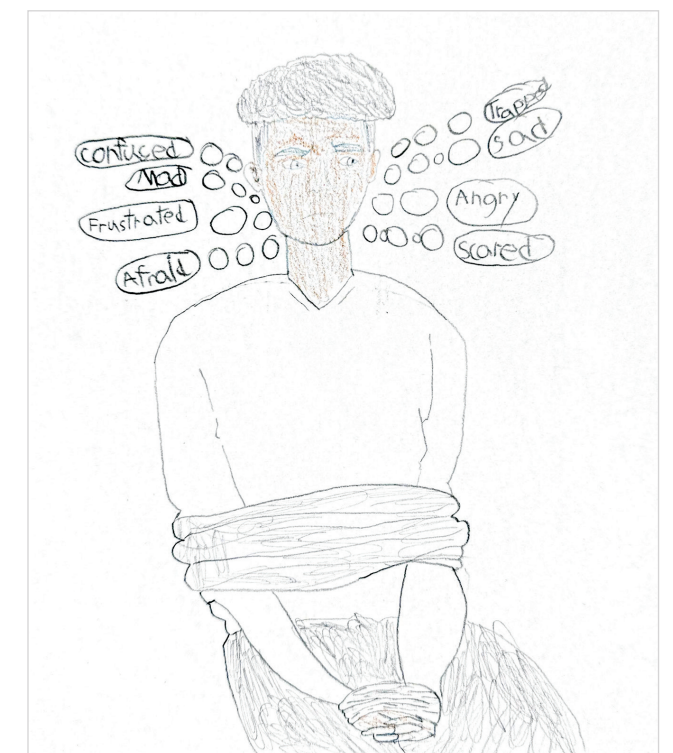
My teacher told me about SPYAC. I enjoyed being a part of SPYAC. It was interesting to learn about some of the laws and how they change.

**What is something unique or special about your school?**

In our transition program we travel around our community to learn and learn how to use the city bus. We volunteer and participate in internships and learn how to become good employees.

**What do you want to do after you finish school?**

When I am done in the transition program, I want to have a paid job in a kitchen where I can learn more culinary skills. I think it would be fun to get a job at Nintendo, too, but that would be my dream job as a play tester!



*Illustration by Julian, which he made as part of SPYAC's Advocacy Blog. The image depicts a student experiencing the harmful practices of restraint / isolation and how it makes him feel.*



YOUTH ADVOCACY: LUMEN STUDENT PROFILE

ANESSA (NESSA) RODRIGUEZ

**Age:** 17  
**School:** Lumen High School , Spokane, WA  
**Graduation Year:** 2024

**How would you describe yourself?**  
I am hardworking, independent, self-driving, open-minded, I am a fun mother who wants to create a good life path for my daughter. The things I value in myself are loyalty, respect, and dignity. I am a great listener and like discovering new things.

**What does it mean to be an "advocate" to you? How has advocacy impacted your life/educational journey?**  
An advocate is someone who speaks their mind and is very clear on what they want. To be successful in any type of way, I feel like you have to be willing to speak up to get anything that you want. Growing up in a system that isn't founded on helping you or isn't all about you, you have to stand out, so people notice you. I have had to advocate for myself and for my daughter to make sure we are seen and heard.

**How did you become connected with LEV? What has your experience been like?**  
I first connected with LEV through an internship program at my high school. I have enjoyed working with LEV. I've learned about people who advocate for issues in the educational system. Working with Kenji was a great experience and getting to lead an advocacy project with other students in my area has helped me become more confident in my own understanding and practice of advocacy and leadership.

**Your education journey has been different than many students. What is something from your experience you think all students should be able to experience?**  
I think all students should really get to experience what an internship is like because it gives you the chance to experience and learn what you like doing as a job or as a hobby. It gives you the opportunity to get out



of the classroom and experience what life might be like after school. Students should get the chance to do independent studies; getting this opportunity has allowed me to graduate and go to college early. The opportunity to do independent studies stopped me from being held back and instead gave me the chance to graduate early.

**What are your plans after graduation?**  
I plan to attend Gonzaga University for Sports Management, but I am also considering education. I am also going to focus on making life better. Finding more things to explore and looking for opportunities to travel. I want to be more adventurous and spend time doing things that excite me and teach me new things.

STORIES FROM THE FIELD

SCHOOL-TO-PRISON PIPELINE  
LEGISLATIVE WORKING TABLE (STPP)

The 2024 legislative session marked LEV's third year convening the STPP, a statewide coalition that discusses and advocates for social-emotional learning investments in our education system that move us away from punishment of students and instead toward restorative practices. This year we discussed, collaborated, and engaged with legislation regarding isolation and restraint practices in schools (detailed in the next section), shifting the burden of proof for Individualized Educational Programs (IEPs) from families to school districts, and fines and fees in the juvenile justice system.

Outcomes:

- ▶ Burden of Proof — **Senate Bill 5883**: passed both legislative chambers, signed by governor
- ▶ Isolation and Restraint — **House Bill 1479**: passed House, died in Senate Early Learning & K-12 Committee
- ▶ Fines and Fees — **Senate Bill 5974**: passed both legislative chambers, signed by governor

ISOLATION & RESTRAINT SUBGROUP

Born out of the STPP, the isolation and restraint subgroup has convened the last two years to advocate for legislation that would:

- ▶ Limit use of restraint and isolation practices in schools
- ▶ Ban the use of chemical and mechanical restraint of students

- ▶ Prohibit isolation of students in grades PreK-12
- ▶ Institute comprehensive staff and governing body training requirements around these requirements and preventative behavioral supports in school

As opposed to the 2023 legislative session, in 2024 we were able to get HB 1479 through the House through a bipartisan compromise. Unfortunately, the bill did not advance in the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee. We were able to secure a budget proviso, however, that allows for demonstration sites around the state to phase out these practices as well as technical assistance to districts looking to eliminate these practices.

In order to ensure passage in 2025, LEV and its partners have organized four working groups to advance the work.

- ▶ **Field:** In charge of expanding the coalition, bringing in more partners from around the state dedicated to safe and inclusive education practices. This workgroup will track and engage members around opportunities to present coalition work to stakeholder groups (e.g. conferences).
- ▶ **Legislative:** Working with legislators to address concerns and introduce successful legislation in the 2025 legislative session. This workgroup will also take legislators on visits of schools that have successfully eliminated isolation and restraint.



- **Implementation:** Hold OSPI accountable for the implementation of the isolation and restraint budget proviso.
- **Communications:** Share data from the ACLU WA / Disability Rights Washington **report** and messaging about the need for early interventions to prevent behavioral health crises.

**SOUTH SHORE LEADS WAY IN ISOLATION AND RESTRAINT WORK**

South Shore PreK-8 has played an important part in the work to ban isolation and restraint in Washington schools. The school’s focus has been on providing supports for students who have been labeled “behavior issues” to allow them to thrive in the classroom. With building-wide training, mental health supports, social-emotional learning instruction, and a dedicated staff, South Shore has been able to reduce the amount of time that students spend in self-contained classrooms and increase the amount of time students are mainstreamed into general education. School administration and staff have also participated in efforts to share their success with legislators, from meeting with lawmakers individually to testifying in committee hearings. Their dedication to banning isolation and restraint is apparent in the work they do on the ground and in the outreach they continue to do.

**FIELD REPORT**

In 2023, we took a different approach and used three different formats to conduct our field interviews — individual, group, and town halls. Individual interviews were conducted with policy experts in order to provide ample time for technical policy discussions. The group interviews were conducted with preexisting coalitions and parent and student groups. For our town halls, we gathered individuals from different sectors to promote cross-sector discussions. Our Field office in Spokane, which convenes the Spokane Future Educators of Color Consortium (SFECC), also engaged the consortium in policies and investments that will improve the recruitment and retention of educators of color in the district.

Participants engaged around their experience with three issues: education funding and equity, isolation and restraint practices, and social-emotional learning and the mental health of students and educators. Interviews followed the following format: ten minutes of ground setting and introductions, ten minutes to review LEV’s policy platforms and positions on the respective subjects, thirty minutes to provide interactive feedback on the issue and interviewees’ unique experience and expertise, and a ten-minute recap of interviewees’ feedback and answers.

**Themes:**

- Education funding and equity: Concerns about funding cuts with counselors first to be cut, followed by school closures
- Isolation and restraint practices: With the right supports, all schools in our state can eliminate these practices
- Social-emotional learning and the mental health of students and educators: School is an environmental factor that affects mental health, community, the system, peers, and teachers. School has a big impact on students' mental health. There has been an increase in community violence since COVID. There has been a gap in adapting and meeting the needs of students. Those stressors have definitely affected students’ ability to regulate. There is an ongoing dynamic that is school, but there is a bigger community factor. School is just one factor, not a driver

The full Field Report can be found on our [website](#).

**SPOKANE FUTURE EDUCATORS OF COLOR CONSORTIUM (SFECC)**

Over the last year, LEV took another step in working to diversify the teacher workforce in the Spokane Region by creating an Action Committee for the Spokane Future Educators of Color Consortium (SFECC). This Action Committee is made up of highly invested community members and representatives from Spokane Public Schools, Educational Service District 101, Eastern Washington University, Gonzaga University, Whitworth University, the early learning sector, the Washington State Charter Schools Association, educators, and

community activists. Over the last year this committee has been working to ask the hard questions and steer the long-term work of the SFECC.

**AMBASSADORS OF LAKEVIEW ACHIEVING SUCCESS (ALAS) STUDENT LEADERSHIP GROUP**

**ALAS’s Mission Statement:** “The Ambassadors of Lakeview Achieving Success (ALAS) Student Leadership Group is based on engaging the (Pasco) community in educational and cultural events, as well as promoting drug and alcohol awareness. Our satisfaction is knowing that we are helping our community and our future generations grow.”

The above mission statement was created over 10 years ago by the second ALAS cohort, which was the first cohort that LEV and Tri-Cities Regional Field Director Ruvine Jimenez became involved with. ALAS translates to the word WINGS in Spanish.



ALAS is a student-led group, which means that students set their own agenda, conduct their own meetings, and decide what they would like to work on. Ruvine refers

to the Search Institute’s **Developmental Relationships Framework** when working with the ALAS students. The students know the needs of the Lakeview Mobile Home Park Community in Pasco, and mentors are available to provide the resources they are funded with to meet those needs. LEV as a mentor also staffs ALAS.

Over the past 12 months, 23 students participated according to their interest area and their schedule. ALAS met 40 times including activities, mostly weekly, and average attendance of the 23 students was 6-7 students per meeting. Student attendance varied because of school events, work, or family commitments.



The ALAS students held four Lakeview Mobile Home Park community events, attended three Youth Prevention Summits, skied at Bluewood, and volunteered with the Pasco Prevention Network and the Pasco Police Department.

In June 2024, LEV and ALAS increased recruitment efforts and reached out to advisors from Central Washington University and Heritage University to set up events at Lakeview to learn how the postsecondary education system will interpret their transcript. Other interest areas included: how Running Start or College in the High School credits help or hinder their chosen career or financial aid, and how to read a financial aid award letter. Looking ahead, ALAS will also explore available trade and union opportunities.

THE FUNCTIONS AND LONGITUDINAL OUTCOMES OF ADOLESCENTS’ NATURALLY OCCURRING MENTORSHIPS

This study examines the long-term outcomes related to having a naturally occurring community mentor in adolescence. Results from longitudinal analyses of a nationally representative sample of adolescents revealed that having a mentor in adolescence was related to higher educational attainment, lower criminal activity, higher psychological well-being (i.e., optimism, self-efficacy, and lack of depressive symptoms), and greater romantic relationship satisfaction in adulthood.

(Miranda-Chan, T., Fruiht, V., Dubon, V., & Wray-Lake, L. (2016). The Functions and Longitudinal Outcomes of Adolescents’ Naturally Occurring Mentorships. American Journal of Community Psychology, 57(1-2), 47-59. <https://doi.org/10.1002/ajcp.12031>)

ABOUT LEV FOUNDATION

League of Education Voters Foundation (LEV Foundation) is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization that provides strategic, accurate, and timely information about research-driven education policies and practices to citizens, educators, policymakers, and the media. We partner with community-based organizations to support parents and community members in improving public education systems in their communities and across the state. Our programs include coalition building, grassroots organizing, training, policy research, and analysis. We work to improve opportunities for every public school student in the state, and especially students and families who are systemically and historically underserved, and disproportionately affected by failing systems.

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- Community Center for Education Results
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We apologize for any errors or omissions in this list. Please contact [info@educationvoters.org](mailto:info@educationvoters.org) to make any corrections.

South Shore student portraits by Jerry and Lois Photography <https://jerryandlois.com/>

Leandro, 7th grade

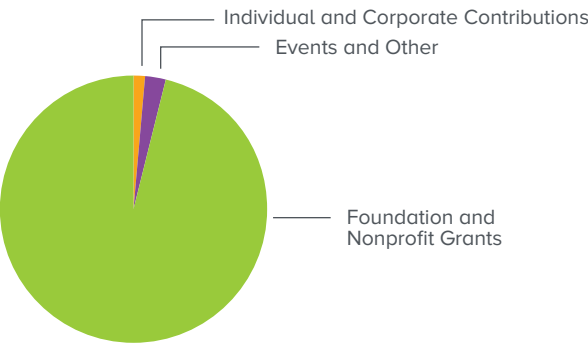
LEV FOUNDATION FINANCIAL OVERVIEW  
YEAR ENDED DECEMBER 31, 2023 (AUDITED)

Statement of Activities

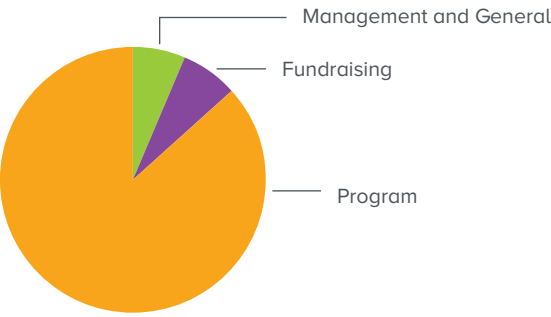
<b>Revenue</b>	
Foundation and nonprofit grants	\$ 1,484,871
Individual and corporate contributions	39,154
Events and other	17,302
<b>Total Earned Revenue</b>	<b>\$ 1,541,327</b>
<b>Expenses</b>	
Program	\$ 2,095,546
Management and general	168,471
Fundraising	153,462
<b>Total Expenses</b>	<b>\$ 2,417,479</b>
<b>Change in Net assets</b>	<b>\$ (876,152)</b>

Statement of Position

<b>Assets</b>	
Cash	\$ 1,065,759
Grants receivable	862,222
Other assets	132,425
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$ 2,060,406</b>
<b>Liabilities</b>	<b>\$ 516,263</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	
with donor restrictions	738,367
designated for operating reserve	550,000
without restrictions or designations	255,776
Total Net Assets	1,544,143
<b>Total Liabilities and Net Assets</b>	<b>\$ 2,060,406</b>



LEV Foundation Revenue



LEV Foundation Expenses



OUR IMPACT

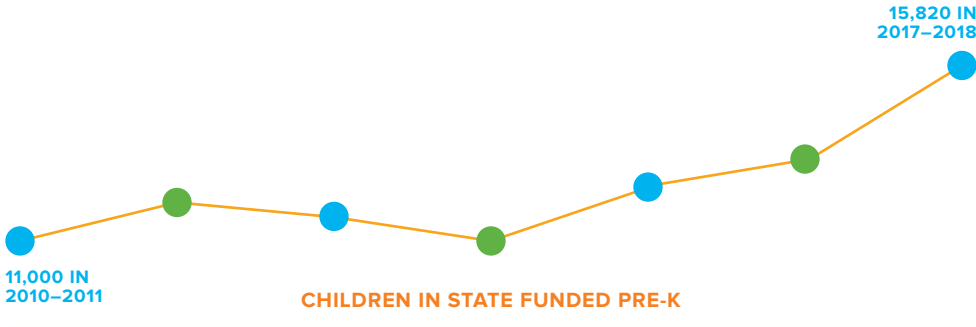
Founding

2001 League of Education Voters founded

Early Childhood Education

2013 League of Education Voters helped pass House Bill 1723, which expanded the state Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and the use of the Washington Inventory of Kindergarten Readiness (WAKids) so that 14,500 more low-income children could attend high-quality preschool.

2015 League of Education Voters helped pass the Early Start Act (House Bill 1491), which increased access to high-quality ECEAP early learning for 1,600 children and dramatically increased the quality and viability of our childcare system.



HB 1491  
1,600  
CHILDREN

SERVED THROUGH  
EXPANDED ECEAP  
ACCESS

2,500  
CHILDREN

TO BE SERVED  
EACH YEAR  
THROUGH  
EXPANDED SEATTLE  
PRE-K CAPACITY

1,171  
ECEAP  
SLOTS

ADDED TO  
THE PROGRAM  
IN 2019

15,800  
SLOTS

TOTAL ECEAP  
SLOTS FUNDED  
FOR THE 2022-23  
SCHOOL YEAR

2015+ League of Education Voters work at South Shore PreK-8 led to Seattle's citywide preschool program, which has prepared more than 6,300 children for kindergarten since 2015.

2019 League of Education Voters successfully advocated with Early Learning Action Alliance partners for 1,171 spots in the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP) and a 6% state reimbursement rate increase for childcare providers.

2021 League of Education Voters successfully advocated with Early Learning Action Alliance partners to pass the landmark Fair Start for Kids Act (Senate Bill 5237), which significantly increases access to essential early learning programs like Working Connections Child Care (WCCC) and the Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program (ECEAP), strengthens child care programs by expanding access to support services, and grows recruitment and retention for child care businesses.

K-12 Funding

2000 Founders of League of Education Voters work to pass Initiative 728, which brings nearly \$500 per pupil into every school across Washington state.

2007 League of Education Voters helped pass House Joint Resolution 4204, an initiative that amended the state constitution to allow a simple majority of voters to authorize local school district levies. More than \$14 billion in local school district funding would not have passed as of June 2021 without this bill. This includes maintenance and operations, transportation, and capital (predominately tech) levies.

2009 League of Education Voters led the advocacy to pass House Bills 2261 and 2776, which defined basic education. These are the laws on which the Washington Supreme Court's *McCleary* education funding decision was based.

I-728  
\$500  
PER PUPIL

HJR 4204  
\$14  
BILLION

K-12 Funding (continued)

2010 League of Education Voters was the lead plaintiff in the successful effort to overturn Initiative 1053, the initiative requiring two-thirds legislative approval to raise revenue or close tax loopholes.

2017 League of Education Voters led advocacy efforts through the Campaign for Student Success to drive \$8.3 billion of state money into our education system to address the Washington Supreme Court's 2012 *McCleary* ruling.

2019–2024 League of Education Voters successfully advocated with Investing in Student Potential coalition partners to increase the special education funded enrollment cap leading to an increase of the cap from 13.5% to 16% in that time.

2023 League of Education Voters successfully advocated with Investing in Student Potential coalition partners for a state budget increase of over \$180 million annually for special education in 2023-2025.

I-1053  
2/3  
OVERTURNED

\$180M  
FOR  
SPECIAL  
ED

Student Supports

2012 League of Education Voters was the key driver in passing Initiative 1240, which created Washington's charter public school system.

2016 League of Education Voters worked with the Senate Education Chair to help pass the Opportunity Gap Bill (House Bill 1541), in which students will no longer be suspended or expelled for discretionary offenses, and better statewide data on student demographics will ensure that the system is working to keep all students on track and in school.

2016 League of Education Voters helped pass Senate Bill 6194, which saved Washington's charter public schools. The new charter public school law increases accountability while still allowing flexibility and innovation to address student needs.

2019 League of Education Voters successfully advocated with Investing in Student Potential coalition partners for a one-time special education investment of \$25 million in professional development for educators on inclusive practices.

2020 League of Education Voters work at South Shore PreK-8 led to Multi-Tiered System of Supports [MTSS] teams in every Seattle school.

MTSS in Seattle Public Schools Year Six (2021–22) Highlights: All 104 Seattle schools required to put Multi-Tiered System of Supports (MTSS) plans into their public-facing Continuous School Improvement Plan (CSIP) documents based on increased performance in prior years.

2019 – 2024 League of Education Voters successfully advocated with Investing in Student Potential coalition partners to support the creation and sustained funding for the Inclusive Practices Technical Assistance Network (IPTN) to provide professional development and technical assistance support for schools and educators to support inclusive practices

2022 League of Education Voters and partners helped pass House Bill 1664, which added \$90 million in funding for staff who support the physical, social, and emotional health of students, like counselors, nurses, social workers, and more.

2024 League of Education Voters and partners helped pass House Bill 1541, the Nothing About Us Without Us Act, which ensures representation of underrepresented populations who have direct lived experience with issues being explored on state workgroups, councils, task forces, etc.

5,000  
+

ENROLLED IN  
CHARTER PUBLIC  
SCHOOLS

>2X

EMPLOYMENT OF  
BIPOC TEACHERS IN  
CHARTER SCHOOLS

17  
OPERATING  
CHARTER SCHOOLS

50  
SCHOOLS NOW USING THE  
RULER SEL CURRICULUM IN  
SEATTLE, FIRST ADOPTED AT  
SOUTH SHORE

HB 1541  
NOTHING  
ABOUT US  
WITHOUT  
US ACT

Post-Secondary

2007 League of Education Voters helped pass and protect the College Bound Scholarship to provide state financial aid to low-income students who may not consider college a possibility due to the cost.

2014 League of Education Voters helped pass the REAL Hope Act (Senate Bill 6523, our state's version of the Dream Act), allowing qualified undocumented students to apply for federal student aid and participate in the State Need Grant. An additional \$5 million was apportioned for 2014-2015 to serve newly eligible Dreamers.

2019 League of Education Voters worked with partners to help pass the Workforce Education Investment Act (House Bill 2158), which fully funded the State Need Grant, now renamed the Washington College Grant, in the 2020-2021 school year — meaning that every eligible student has access to the funding they need to access postsecondary opportunities.

SB 6523  
REAL  
HOPE ACT

HB 2158  
WASH.  
COLLEGE  
GRANT





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# THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT

*Jessica, 8th grade*