

Reclaiming Worker Power Energizing Our Movement

WASHINGTON STATE LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF PROFESSIONAL, RESPECTFUL WAGES FOR PREK-12 CLASSIFIED RESOLUTION #2024.22

WHEREAS, Washington State's PreK-12 Public Schools are a vital part of our economy and of the families of working people, educating over 1 million students; and

WHEREAS, PreK-12 classified staff, also referred to as School-Related Personnel (SRPs) or Education Support Professionals (ESPs), include workers from a variety of jobs in public schools such as paraeducators, food service workers, office support professionals, custodians, grounds and maintenance crews, technology specialists, bus drivers, behavior support specialists, family involvement coordinators, safety and security staff, budget and payroll staff, and more; and

WHEREAS, PreK-12 classified staff are a racially and ethnically diverse group of PreK-12 workers who are reflective of the communities they serve and who often can be a language connection for students and families; and

WHEREAS, PreK-12 classified staff play vital roles inside and outside the classroom to ensure that students are safe, healthy, and ready to learn; and

WHEREAS, public schools could not operate without the work of dedicated PreK-12 classified staff, from the bus drivers who bring students to school, the food service professionals who prepare and serve healthy meals, the paraprofessionals who offer individualized and small group instruction for students, the custodial and grounds crews who keep building clean and safe for students, and other behind-the-scenes roles that are often taken for granted; and

WHEREAS, despite their importance to the operations of PreK-12 public schools, too many PreK-12 classified staff make far less than a living wage, with too many qualifying for federal assistance programs to take care of their families; and

WHEREAS, these low wages can lead to high turnover and vacancy rates, such as the attrition rates for paraeducators which have grown dramatically since the 2008-09 school year rising from 8 percent attrition to 23 percent in the 2021-22 school year; and

WHEREAS, high turnover has an added cost to districts to recruit and train new staff while also impacting students by disrupting the connections they rely upon with caring, qualified professionals in schools; and

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CLASSIFIED (cont.)
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WHEREAS, PreK-12 classified staff are represented by a broad cross-section of our labor movement, including Teamster locals within Joint Council 28, SEIU local 925, Public School Employees SEIU local 1948, WEA, and AFT Washington; now therefore, be it

RESOLVED, that PreK-12 classified staff deserve wages that allow them to work just one job, afford housing in the community in which they work, afford the healthy foods their families need, and enjoy leisure time activities; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, the Governor, and the State Legislature should include significant salary increases for PreK-12 classified staff in their 2025-2027 biennial budget; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO will work with relevant labor stakeholders to pursue this fiscal goal with the above-mentioned elected officials.