



AFT Washington 2021 Legislative Agenda

AFT Washington is a state federation of 39 locals that represent thousands of education workers, including Head Start educators, bus drivers, nutrition workers, paraeducators, faculty and staff at 19 community and technical colleges, and faculty at the regional 4-year public universities.

We have used a racial equity lens in crafting this 2021 Legislative Agenda and will apply it in assessing the impact of legislation we propose. We recognize the urgent need to dismantle systems of racism and the connections between economic and racial oppression.

PreK-12 Even though the state has a constitutional obligation to fully fund basic education, this hasn't stopped districts from making bad decisions such as laying off the frontline workers who kept services running when school buildings were closed in the spring. **All members of the education team—from bus drivers, nutrition workers, custodians, paraeducators, to teachers – are needed to deliver basic education to Washington's students.**

- **SEBB** benefits have been critical to school employees during this pandemic. We will defend this program from any attempts at take-aways.
- Emerging needs of schools to deliver services such as meals and technology during remote and hybrid schooling have made more urgent the need to **update the K-12 transportation funding model**. This funding model needs to both meet shifting transportation needs and preserve good union jobs in the process.
- Required **Paraeducator professional training** was vetoed by Governor Inslee after the 2020 session. This has become an unfunded mandate that should be fully funded.
- We support passing legislation, such as 2020 session bill SB 6047, to prohibit retaliation against school employees who report noncompliance with Individual Education Plans.

Community and Technical Colleges Washington has some of the nation's best community and technical colleges. These colleges can play an important role in economic recovery. However, this system entered the pandemic underfunded. Cutting budgets now means thousands of fewer classes, program closures, inadequate student supports and layoffs. **Following through on shared goals of diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) in higher education means saying no to budget cuts. We must invest in equity.**

- **Students need qualified and available counselors to succeed.** Only 40% of CTC students complete their programs. This can in part be tied to lack of counseling faculty: several CTCs have zero counselors on campus. History shows us that during economic downturns, enrollment at CTCs goes up as students return to college to receive more training. Now more than ever, we need sufficient numbers of faculty counselors at every CTC campus. The HB 1355 Counselor Taskforce report will inform legislation on minimum qualifications and faculty counselor-to-student ratio standards.
- **Students need educators with stability.** Currently, 70% of CTC faculty are adjunct faculty who often struggle with financial, housing and healthcare insecurity. When their classes are cancelled, often just days before classes are set to begin, they are effectively laid off and lose healthcare. We know that teaching conditions are learning conditions. We will push legislation that sets system-

wide standards for faculty, including for the ratio of full-time to part-time faculty and equal pay for equal work.

- 78% of the faculty workforce in Adult Basic Ed – a set of programs for learning English and mastering basic skills needed for college courses—are adjunct faculty. We should not have our most vulnerable students being taught by a workforce paid poverty wages.
- We want to attain a higher ed workforce that reflects the diversity of the student body. To do this, we must address the material factors of recruitment and retention of faculty, including hiring practices and the prevalence of contingent work.

Progressive Revenue We are in the middle of a global pandemic and a revenue crisis. At the same time so many people are suffering, corporate profits are rising at a record pace. Many leaders, organizations, community groups have stated that, to adequately address this crisis and take steps such that the next crisis is not yet another tragedy for communities of color and working people, **we must invest in the public good now**. Public education and public sector jobs are key parts of that public good that we need to invest in. The only way we can do this is through raising progressive revenue. There are many policies we support, including the following:

- **Remove the cap on big tech’s contributions to the Workforce Education Investment Account.** This dedicated higher education account is funded by a B&O surcharge, in which global companies with more than \$25 billion in revenues have their contributions capped at \$9 million a year. Tech companies like Amazon and Microsoft are thriving during the pandemic. Removing this cap will provide increased revenues (\$50 million/biennium) immediately as the tax structure is already in place.
- **Ask millionaires and billionaires to pay their fair share.** We support an excise tax on employers that targets high earners (for example, \$300,000+ in salary).
- We also support taxing **capital gains**. A 9% tax on the sale of bonds and stocks, with exemptions for home sales, retirement accounts, and other similar assets that working people have, would generate \$1 billion per year, and affect only a tiny fraction of Washington households.

Labor We will generally support bills identified in the United Labor Lobby, prioritizing those bills that address our members’ needs and concerns. One of the top concerns in the labor community is addressing the childcare crisis. The economic burdens of inadequate childcare funding from the state fall disproportionately on women and people of color. The state must invest more in childcare.

Social Justice We will support bills identified by our community partners, including the Communities for our Colleges Coalition, Racial Equity Team, Washington CAN, Washington Voting Rights Coalition, and others, that create equity and social justice for Washingtonians.

Healthcare for All We will support legislation which moves us toward universal healthcare for all. Many workers have lost their employer-provided healthcare in the COVID crisis, pointing to the need to disconnect healthcare from employment for the well-being of our communities.