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The Honorable David Quall, Chair
Washington State House of Representatives Education Committee
301 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Dear Rep. Quall,

This is to express our support for HB 1813/SB 5449 relating to a statewide effort to establish and meet graduation and reengagement goals. The bills correct two shortcomings in state efforts to improve high school graduation rates—a key measure our Campaign's Report Card tracks in our effort to make Washington the healthiest state in the nation.

First, the bill establishes clear goals for our state's school system regarding drop out and reengagement rates, and clear accountability within the school system for steps toward achieving those goals. We believe this simple act will focus and energize existing efforts in ways that little else can.

Second, the bill establishes a cross agency governmental group with the clear task of getting the state's health and social support agencies, among others, collaborating to achieve this goal. We agree that, especially in these tough times, we dare not waste resources in poorly coordinated public efforts.

As you know, the Healthiest State Campaign has been working with hundreds of schools through our Governor's Health Bowl and Spring Training Challenge, as well as through our close relationship with the association of local public health and safety network agencies. We have been encouraging schools to implement coordinated school health approaches in part to address a leading cause of school drop out—social and health conditions that reduce the readiness to learn. As the Building Bridges Advisory Committee takes shape within state government, we look forward to opportunities they may identify for a new kind of public/private partnership with community groups like ours to improve perhaps the most important single life long health protective factor—educational attainment.

Sincerely,

Greg Vigdor, President & CEO
Washington Health Foundation
Healthiest State Campaign

Cc: House Education Committee members
Sandi Swarhout and Ryan Spiller, Capitol Connection
Robin Arnold-Williams, Director Governor Gregoire's Policy Office

*Board as of January 1, 2009

Making Washington
the Healthiest State
in the Nation