

Mercer Island PTA Council Statement on Funding Staff Salaries

As stated by the Washington State PTA, our mission is for PTA to be: A powerful voice for children; A relevant resource for families, schools and communities; and A strong advocate for the well-being and education of all children. Some individuals might interpret this mission to mean that that local PTA units would therefore fund extra staff to support the education of children. However, the Mercer Island PTA Council strongly disagrees with PTA dollars being spent for teacher salaries for the reasons outlined below.

- 1) Local units funding salaries sets up disparities between our schools. Historically, some schools on Mercer Island have had a larger percentage of Free & Reduced Lunch funding. These schools may have more difficulty fundraising for their PTA programs, therefore causing equity issues between the schools in our small district. Some schools have long-standing models of fundraising that differ from other newer schools which can affect their ability to raise funds for staffing.
- 2) PTA fundraising is not stable for a variety of reasons including external economic factors. If PTA funding is unstable year to year, the onus of retaining a staff member at a particular school falls to the district. Due to contract negotiations and seniority clauses, the school district may be unable to control which staff are retained. School boundaries and enrollment may change significantly.
- 3) Funding a staff salary does not consider benefits that are part of a staff member's total compensation. As these benefits increase or change, the PTA may not be able to continue this funding.
- 4) PTA units who have contributed funds to supplement staff at a school often feel ownership of "their" teacher or staff member. However, the employment status of that teacher is fully determined by the district. This can create objections by members of the local PTA who donated to fund a staff member.
- 5) Per Washington State PTA guidance, funding of staff is not part of WSPTA's standard or vetted language for IRS applications; therefore, most PTAs have not included this activity in their application to the IRS. When a PTA is chartered, a form is filed with the IRS that states in detail everything the PTA intends to do (IRS Form 1023).
- 6) Per Washington State PTA, there is a potential impact on the PTA and the board of directors to consider as well; PTAs who have designated funds to pay for staff have been named in wrongful termination lawsuits when future boards cut funding and staff was let go. PTAs may not have fully vetted grant policies or insurance to protect them in these instances.