



## Give our student Board members the ability to vote on board decisions

[Senate Bill \(SB\) 5497](#) would extend voting authority to the student members on the State Board of Education, allowing them to vote in the same way as other board members. This small but impactful change to operations is needed now as we reimagine and create a better education system for recovery and beyond with students and equity at the center.

The State Board of Education is a 16-member Board, including two student members.



**5** Elected



**7** Appointed



**1** Private Schools Representative



**2** Students



**1** The Superintendent of Public Instruction

Under current law, all the members can vote except for the student members. In 2019, the Board changed its bylaws to allow students to make an advisory vote, but we need a statutory change to allow student votes to count.

### The student members:

- Are members of the Association of Washington Student Leaders (AWSL)
- Are selected and recommended by their peers through a process that is designed to ensure students from a wide range of perspectives are considered
- Serve a two-year term, beginning in their junior year of high school—the Board always has one high school junior and one senior
- Represent different sides of the state
- Fulfill the same duties and expectations as do other Board members

**With this change, WA would join the ranks of other states that are leading the way with student members voting on the state boards of education: CA, MD, MA, TN, & VT.**

### Our student members are well-equipped to cast thoughtful votes

- Strong selection, onboarding, and support structures ensure the student members can serve effectively in their role
- They meet regularly with other student groups to collect input from a diverse pool on policy matters under the Board's consideration
- They have a demonstrated track record of casting thoughtful advisory votes

**In Washington: Student members vote on the Washington Student Achievement Council and on the Boards of Regents or Trustees at institutions of higher education.**

### Impact

- Extending voting authority to the Board's student members is a simple and fundamental way of making sure that their input is not merely symbolic, but is truly valued and impactful.
- Granting student members an official vote will make the Board more student-centered and responsive to the people most directly impacted by policy decisions.