DRAFT

Dear Governor Ferguson:

As we move beyond this election season, the Central Valley School District Board of Directors remains committed to maintaining a transparent, balanced budget while meeting the growing educational needs of our students. Although our Educational Programs and Operations (EP&O) levy recently passed by a narrow margin, the increasing needs of our community continue to outpace available resources. We are therefore exploring additional opportunities to support our students and families.

On behalf of the Central Valley School District Board of Directors, we respectfully request that Washington State participate in the **Federal Scholarship Tax Credit (FSTC) program** by the January 1, 2027, deadline.

This federal program offers an opportunity to expand educational resources for Washington students through private donations to qualified Scholarship Granting Organizations (SGOs). These organizations can provide scholarships for a variety of educational needs, including tutoring, transportation, technology, internet access, educational supplies, tuition, and special education services.

One of the program's most important potential benefits is helping close the opportunity gap between students from lower-income and higher-income families. According to research cited by Democrats for Education Reform and the Afterschool Alliance's *America After 3PM* survey, higher-income families spend approximately $6,500 per child on enrichment activities, compared with roughly $730 among lower-income families. The survey also indicates that approximately 72% of Washington children are missing out on after-school programs.

Scholarships funded through SGOs could help address these disparities by expanding access to after-school programs, tutoring, and specialized educational services. Because SGOs can focus on specific areas of need, families would have opportunities to seek assistance tailored to their children's individual learning challenges and circumstances.

Washington's participation would also allow donors to direct eligible contributions toward organizations serving students in our own communities. Without participation, Washington donors may instead choose to support SGOs in participating states, including neighboring Idaho.

This concern is particularly relevant to our region, where cross-border economic activity is already common. We believe Washington students should have the same opportunity to benefit from these privately funded scholarships as students in neighboring states.

The value of participation has been recognized by governors from both political parties. Colorado Governor Jared Polis expressed the concern this way:

"I would be crazy not to opt in. If Colorado doesn't participate, our federal tax dollars will simply flow to other states."

Similarly, New York Governor Kathy Hochul stated:

"I'm not going to leave money on the table when it could help our kids."

And New Mexico Governor Michelle Lujan Grisham emphasized the opportunity to keep federal tax-supported educational resources within her state for the benefit of local students.

At a time when Washington faces significant budget challenges, we believe it is important to consider additional resources that can complement existing public education funding without placing further demands on state or local taxpayers.

The Central Valley School District Board of Directors has formally adopted a resolution supporting Washington's participation in this program. Our support reflects a straightforward, nonpartisan priority: ensuring that students and families have access to the educational resources they need to succeed.

We respectfully encourage you to consider Washington's participation in the Federal Scholarship Tax Credit program before the January 1, 2027, deadline. We appreciate your consideration and your continued commitment to the students and families of Washington State.

Sincerely,

Central Valley School District Board of Directors

