

Kelsey McCleary ●



Port Hadlock, WA 98339

January 6, 2017

Senator Jim Hargrove
411 Legislative Building
PO Box 40424
Olympia, WA 98504

*This letter also was sent to State Reps.
Kevin Van De Wege and Steve Tharinger*

Dear Senator Hargrove,

I was just a kid in middle school when my family filed the *McCleary v. State* lawsuit on behalf of me and my little brother, Carter. Today, I'm a senior at Western Washington University, all set to graduate this quarter. Carter's a senior at Chimacum High School. It's too late for the state to provide us the amply funded K-12 education that was our constitutional right. But there's still time for the children Carter or I might have some day. There's still time for the 1 million kids who'll be in our public schools next year.

When I was in high school, I remember my science teacher having to make his own textbooks for his students. My math teacher had to photocopy pages from his teacher's textbook onto little 4x4 sheets for us. The lack of even basic textbooks made it awfully hard to learn and do homework — all because my school couldn't afford to buy all the books we needed. I also really wanted to take more challenging classes, but Chimacum didn't have the money to provide them. For example, the only foreign language classes available to me here in our Pacific Rim economy were an introductory two years of French or Spanish. And that's still all Chimacum High can afford to offer today.

Being part of this long, drawn-out court case has taught me a lot. I've learned how the court system operates and I've seen how hard people have to fight to make a change in our state. It's been really frustrating to see Washington's elected officials fail, year after year, to obey court orders and uphold my constitutional right to an amply funded education. I got a traffic ticket once and the court said I had to pay a fine, so I did. Why don't legislators think they have to obey the law? I know it's expensive, and I know you have a lot of other things you'd rather deal with. But no other duty is "paramount" under our state constitution. Amply funding our schools for all kids is your first priority under the constitution.

So, I'm writing to ask you to finally do whatever it takes to provide all Washington students with the great education promised by our constitution. The kids in Washington's public schools are our best hope for a better tomorrow. Our constitution recognizes that there's nothing more important to our state's democracy and future than a strong, amply-funded education system. I hope you do, too.

I'm proud to have my family's name associated with this important case, but it won't mean anything if you don't have the courage and leadership to obey the court's orders and the constitution you swore to uphold when you took office. Is that too much for a voter to ask?

Sincerely,

Kelsey McCleary