



## Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds

The Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) is a state agency established in 2006 to reduce the opportunity gap by supporting families, students, educators, and communities in understanding the public K-12 education system and resolving concerns collaboratively. OEO fulfills its mission through three primary duties: informal conflict resolution, outreach and training, and policy leadership.

All three duties are essential to the mission and address conflicts in schools that perpetuate inequities and reduce student success. More than half of the concerns that we receive each year involve students and/or parents with disabilities. Our most common topic for workshops and presentations is special education. We continue to center anti-ableism, inclusion, language access, and racial justice in our work.

Over the last four years, OEO has seen a sharp increase in demands but has also been historically underfunded.

- OEO's annual case load continues to double this school year with return to in-person learning
- Outreach has grown over the past four years by 5,000% to reach over 253,000 people annually
- Last year, OEO served on almost 25 policy committees with a staff of just 7.4 FTE statewide and will be taking on at least two additional workgroups this year.

Due to staffing constraints, OEO has cut services in all three areas, leaving communities underserved or not responded to in a timely manner.

To remedy this issue, **OEO is seeking additional funding for three Education Ombuds and related supports:**

- FY 2022: \$159,000
- FY 2023: \$520,000 (ongoing)

These requests encompass salary, benefits, technology, travel, and administrative support.

The additional funding will enable OEO to accomplish the following:

- Double the agency's ability to offer conflict resolution services in complex, high stakes cases from 700 cases annually to 1400 cases annually and reduce wait times
- Double OEO's capacity to address intake and speed the process from 7 days to 3 days
- Create a new service at the intake level to offer dedicated expertise in resolving time-sensitive concerns that cannot wait 3 days and are high stakes, such as unenrollment from school, school safety, and mental health
- Staff additional policy workgroups focused on graduation outcomes, COVID response, and system-involved youth
- Meet the current demand for outreach

For more information about the request that OEO has raised to the Governor for consideration in his proposed budget, please reach out to us at [oeoinfo@gov.wa.gov](mailto:oeoinfo@gov.wa.gov).