



Washington State Senate

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September 4, 2025

Nick Brown
Attorney General
PO Box 40100
Olympia, WA 98504-0100

RE: Workforce education investment account

Dear Attorney General Brown,

I am writing to request an informal opinion from your office to gain clarity on the interpretation of an existing statute (RCW 43.79.195).

As Chair of the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee and a member of the Senate Ways & Means Committee, I am exploring options to provide funding for STEM robotics programs for students in grades 4-12. While the legislature provided funding for these programs for many years, this funding was eliminated last session when \$138 million in Grants and Pass Through Funding was cut from the budget of the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. So, I am exploring other eligible funding sources for these important programs.

RCW 43.79.195 establishes Washington's workforce investment account. The statute notes that "Expenditures from this account may be used only for higher education compensation, state-funded student aid programs, and workforce development including career connected learning as defined by RCW 28C.30.020".

Since STEM robotics programs (like FIRST Robotics) prepare students for careers in STEM by providing hands-on skills training in building full size robots in conjunction with industry mentors, I am assuming these programs would qualify under RCW 43.79.195 as "career connected learning", "workforce development" and/or "state-funded student aid programs" (especially with the historical precedent during the 2019-2021 biennium when the account was used for K-12 career connected learning).

Therefore, I would like to specifically request an informal opinion on the following question:

- 1) Do STEM robotics programs (like FIRST Robotics) fit the definition of an eligible expenditure for which funding could be appropriated from the workforce education investment account?

Thank you, Attorney General Brown. I really appreciate your time and value your Office's opinion.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Lisa Wellman".

Senator Lisa Wellman
41st Legislative District