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To the Honorable Speaker and Members,
The House of Representatives of the State of Washington

Ladies and Gentlemen:

I am returning, without my approval as to Section 2, Substitute House Bill No. 1708 entitled:

"AN ACT Relating to dropout prevention"

This bill encompasses four activities related to school dropouts: a study of effective school prevention programs and practices, a study of Becca bill issues, changes in enrollment and dropout data collection, and, authorization of accredited public tribal colleges to participate in the Running Start Program.

Section 2 of this bill provides for the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), in conjunction with the administrative offices of the courts, to convene a work group to evaluate four items: (1) the implementation of the Becca bill and other school attendance measures with regard consistent implementation and conformance with state law; (2) the definition of excused and unexcused absences; (3) the creation of incentives for school districts to improve student attendance; and (4) data collection requirements related to graduation, dropouts, student transfer and school attendance issues.

Several of the items in Section 2 are included in other sections of the bill. For example, the OSPI is charged with reporting on a study of the most promising dropout prevention programs and practices in Section 1. The OSPI is also charged with making changes in enrollment and dropout data collection in Section 3. Both of these activities are key to helping all of us better understand which students are most likely to dropout and what are the most effective ways of reaching these students.

Section 2 specifically states that it should be implemented to the extent funds are appropriated. Unfortunately, funding was not appropriated in this legislation or in the 2005-07 appropriations act to carry out the provisions of Substitute House Bill No. 1708. Therefore, I must carefully weigh whether the activities of the bill should be authorized at this time, knowing that resources are scarce.

For these reasons, I have vetoed Section 2 of Substitute House Bill 1708.

With the exception of Section 2, Substitute House Bill No. 1708 is approved.

Respectfully submitted,

/s/
Christine O. Gregoire
Governor