



NORTHWEST MARITIME CENTER
Port Townsend, Washington

February 10, 2020

Dear Commissioners,

The aspiration to create a maritime high school in Seattle is as inspired and necessary as it is timely. The need to inspire and recruit the next generation of maritime workers is well documented and longstanding, but now with the Port of Seattle acting as a catalyst, community organizations in place to mobilize a host community, and the Northwest Maritime Center ready to lend its experience molding the powerful experiences of the sea into public schools, it appears we might have the critical mass of relationships, experience, public support, and chutzpah to make it happen.

Headquartered in Port Townsend but with a satellite office in Seattle, the Northwest Maritime Center has been quietly breaking trail on school-based maritime learning in our region for decades. For over 30 years we have been augmenting school curriculum with maritime education, and for the past seven years we acted as thought leaders and fundraisers to help our school district systemically re-tool and create the nation's first place-based, maritime-themed K-12 system that makes maritime-themed learning the organizing principle of the entire district; from teaching students to swim in kindergarten, to immersive experiences in marine science in middle school, to the state's first high school CTE program for Vessel Operations. This year we added a half-day, maritime skills center that serves youth from multiple districts and gives them the training, skills, certifications, and connections to get their first job at sea or continue their training at community college, state maritime academy, formal apprenticeship, job corps, etc

The results of our work are compelling. Student learning has improved district-wide, and our test scores reflect that. The effort has had a positive effect on recruiting talented teachers and administrators, and enrollment has increased as families' increased confidence in the public schools have led to them switching back from private schools. The community has increased faith in the schools, and, following the three failed attempts at a school levy that preceded this initiative, our last levy passed with 73% of the voters in favor—highest in the state that year. Our community

is similarly better informed about the maritime industry, and last fall the Port of Port Townsend became the first port in the state to pass a voter-approved Industrial Development District. There were many factors to that victory, but engaging students who informed their voting parents of the importance of Port facilities certainly played a role.

And yes, recruitment into the industry has gone up. This inaugural class of the skills center program has 70% of its students indicating a desire to pursue a maritime career after graduation.

The reason this has been successful is a courageous school district and willing non-profit partners. The Northwest Maritime Center was the catalyst and fundraiser for the effort, and now there is a constellation of water-related non-profits that are actively contributing to both the direct student experience as well as the feeder programs that drive enrollment.

With programs and events that stretch from Tacoma to Ketchikan, the Northwest Maritime Center is a regionally serving organization, and we are ready to play a role in translating the success we've created in our Port Townsend "test lab" for the students of King County. Thank you for your courage and vision in moving this forward.

Sincerely,



Jake Beattie
Executive Director



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