The recently released house budget includes significant cuts to state spending in order to address a \$1.2 billion shortfall.

Despite the significant deficit facing the state, the K-12 education budget was spared the more drastic reductions faced by social services.

Clearly K-12 education was a priority in this budget.

The preservation of levy equalization funding, and funding for 180 days of instruction, is a relief to school districts across the state.

Understandably, the initial reaction to the K-12 budget is generally positive. Yet, what standard are we to apply in judging this budget?

Just because the budget proposal is better than what was expected, does not necessarily mean it will satisfy the State Supreme Court.

The Court, in the recently released McCleary school funding decision, made it clear that current levels of school funding are inadequate and unconstitutional.

The Court also made it clear that it would not "idly stand by as the Legislature makes unfulfilled promises for reform."

The 2010 Legislature promised significant funding enhancements phased in over time when it passed Substitute House Bill 2776. In McCleary, the Court states unequivocally that the magnitude of prior phase-in steps have been unsatisfactory; even pointing out that full day kindergarten, at the current pace of phase-in, would not be fully implemented until the year 2090.

Written	b١	Jeff	٧	inceni/	t
---------	----	------	---	---------	---

This budget, the first issued after the release of McCleary, makes no meaningful improvements to this timetable.

A "no cuts" budget does not mean that the Legislature has met its paramount duty – nor does another school funding study.

And while it is true that a short supplemental budget session is probably not sufficient to develop a comprehensive solution to funding SHB 2776, the State Board of Education believes that a meaningful down payment is needed to send a "good faith" message to the Court and to schools and set the implementation of SHB 2776 on a reasonable and attainable course.

We appreciate and acknowledge the leadership of the House in protecting K-12 from further reductions, but we believe the post-McCleary era demands a higher standard.

Jeff Vincent is Chair of the Washington State Board of Education.