

Reclaiming Worker Power Energizing Our Movement

WASHINGTON STATE LABOR COUNCIL, AFL-CIO

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF LABOR EDUCATION AND RESEARCH IN WASHINGTON STATE

RESOLUTION #2024.14

WHEREAS, expanding labor education and research is essential to providing support to workers, particularly in the current moment when interest in organized labor is growing amongst the American workforce; and

WHEREAS, labor research is an indispensable organizing tool for the labor movement, informing campaign and bargaining strategies, workplace policies, and training programs; and

WHEREAS, after decades of anti-union propaganda, labor education affords workers with a deeper understanding of labor struggles and historical contexts around past labor victories; and

WHEREAS, students in K-12 schools and two- and four-year colleges from working-class, immigrant, and BIPOC backgrounds benefit from education on workplace rights and have little access to it other than through existing labor education programs; and

WHEREAS, labor education and research are integral to undoing institutional racism and advancing anti-racist practices in Washington's labor movement; and

WHEREAS, labor education and research can foster the next generation of union organizers and worker leaders to continue the growth of the labor movement; and

WHEREAS, demand among students for labor unions and labor-related programs in higher education has accelerated in Washington state, generating record enrollments in labor classes and internships at the University of Washington, and leading to overwhelming student worker votes to join new union locals at Western Washington University and Washington State University; and

WHEREAS, the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies's Building a Movement Labor Internship Program at the University of Washington, now in its fourth year, has created a pathway for students into the labor movement, placing more than forty students with labor unions and community organizations, many of whom have gone on to professional positions on the staff of Washington state unions; and

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WHEREAS, the labor movement is making great strides in higher education across the country, as in California where the State of California allocated \$13 million in 2023 to labor education and research in the University of California system, expanding labor centers at UCLA and UC Berkeley and establishing new centers at every other UC campus; and

WHEREAS, the WSLC has an established history of supporting labor education programs in Washington state, raising tens of thousands of dollars in 2009 within the labor community for the Harry Bridges Center and the Labor Archives of Washington at the University of Washington, as well as the Washington State Labor Education and Research Center (LERC) at South Seattle College; and

WHEREAS, the Harry Bridges Center, the Labor Archives, and the Washington State LERC work closely with the WSLC and its affiliates, including but not limited to the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance, SEIU Healthcare 1199NW, UAW 4121, and UNITE HERE Local 8; and

WHEREAS, thanks to WSLC's lobbying efforts, in 2019 the Washington State Legislature granted a proviso funding to the Bridges Center, Labor Archives, and LERC that allowed these programs to expand their staff and programs; and

WHEREAS, this funding was renewed by the state legislature in 2021 and 2023, and will require renewal again in the 2025 legislative session; and

WHEREAS, existing programs require new funding to maintain present services and programs as well to expand and meet the growing needs of the labor movement; and

WHEREAS, labor education and research is poised to grow in Washington state, but not without the concerted effort and support of the Washington state labor movement; and

WHEREAS, existing higher education programs (the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies, the Labor Archives of Washington at the University of Washington, and the LERC at South Seattle College) support labor education and research taking place within affiliated unions, worker centers, and other pro-worker organizations, with plans for further collaboration; now therefore, be it

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RESOLVED, that the Washington labor community commit to sustaining and expanding labor education and research in both two- and four-year colleges and at new locations such as Western Washington University and Central Washington University and engage the alumni of said institutions; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the WSLC encourage affiliates to invite staff of the Harry Bridges Center and LERC to address union members and leaders, present current research, offer educational programming, and request support; and be it further

RESOLVED, that the WSLC encourage affiliates to make ongoing financial contributions to sponsor labor internships, research, and scholarships for events like the Summer Institute for Union Women and the Cascade Regional Labour Leaders Initiative; and be it finally

RESOLVED, that the WSLC will push for continuing and additional funding for the LERC, Labor Archives, and the Harry Bridges Center for Labor Studies in the 2025 legislative session.