



Washington State Senate

314 Legislative Building
PO Box 40420
Olympia, WA 98504-0420

Senator John Braun
Senate Republican Leader
20th Legislative District



February 9, 2024

The Honorable Jay Inslee
Governor, State of Washington
P.O. Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Governor Inslee,

It's no secret that the environment at Green Hill School in Chehalis has become extremely dangerous for students and staff. News reports have shown you claiming the situation at the facility is improving. The reports of repeated riots, multiple drug overdoses, smuggling of contraband into the facility, employee misconduct, lack of proper supervision and other incidents paint a different picture – one of chaos and lawlessness.

When the chief of police in Centralia, Stacy Denham, requested that you investigate the facility, you dismissed his concerns and the firsthand reports of how bad the situation had gotten. When asked about the staff storing contraband in lockers rather than turning it over to law enforcement, as required by law, you claimed there had been a misunderstanding and said things were improving thanks to the state taking stronger measures to keep drugs out of the facility.

I assure you that things are not improving, assaults are more frequent, and drugs are still flowing into Green Hill School.

According to a news report on Feb. 6, there have been thirty-four 9-1-1 calls from the facility since you made the claim that stronger measures are being enacted.

In a single week in January, four students overdosed on fentanyl. More than one of those young men required multiple doses of the rescue drug Narcan to survive. Other students who have not used drugs in the past are being pressured to use by those who possess smuggled opioids, Xanax, and other illegal substances. Riots are becoming more common. And gang activity is rampant.

In addition to inadequate protocols and staff misconduct resulting from poor management by the Department of Youth, Children and Families, the change in law that opened Green Hill School to students between the ages of 18 to 25 created even more problems. Majority Democrats who passed the law – which you signed and I opposed – made a huge mistake.

Adults do not belong locked up with children.

Since that's not likely to change, the challenge is for you to make it work. The change in law that moved adults to Green Hill School was poorly implemented and what we are seeing now is the disastrous fallout.

I ask you again to launch a complete and credible investigation into the staff, policies, procedures, and executive mismanagement at Green Hill. Get to the root causes of the dysfunction and take swift, meaningful, and common-sense actions to fix them. If staff have engaged in illegal activity, such as smuggling drugs into students or refusing to comply with the law, ensure their prosecution.

I also ask you to stop ignoring and covering up the serious problems brought to light by law enforcement, the press and Green Hill staff who have blown the whistle on the facility.

Policies passed by majority Democrats over the past many years to improve the juvenile justice system are a failed experiment in the name of compassion. It is not compassionate to allow Green Hill School students to be injured, to overdose or to die.

The duty to address this problem is yours.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Braun", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Sen. John Braun
Senate Republican Leader
20th Legislative District