



## 2017 Legislative Priorities:

### **Expand Access to School Breakfast in High Need Schools:**

Hungry kids face extra and unnecessary struggles in school. Schools already offer breakfast - but most of the time it isn't reaching the kids who need it most: WA ranks 45th among states in serving breakfast to low-income students. Requiring very high poverty schools (70% or more low income students) to make breakfast part of the school day - just like lunch is - would help almost 175,000 low-income students start their day with the fuel they need for school success. We also support clarifying use of instructional time so any school can choose to serve breakfast as part of the school day.

### **Making Our Kids and Communities Healthier by Strengthening Washington's Farms:**

Connecting farmers to local schools and other local buyers makes Washington's kids and communities healthier and Washington's farms more successful. WSDA created its nationally recognized Farm to School program (now the Regional Markets program) to provide a valuable resource for our agriculture sector, while also improving school meal quality for students. Restoring \$500,000 to WSDA's Regional Markets program will allow WSDA to meet increasing demand from farmers for the program's expertise and support in expanding farm businesses to new markets, especially schools.

### **Equip School Kitchens to Improve Nutrition for Kids:**

School nutrition staff are often ill-equipped to prepare and serve healthy food because schools don't have needed equipment for cooking from scratch. In 2015, the Legislature appropriated \$5 million for kitchen equipment grants so schools could prepare fresh, healthy food for students. It's clear schools need this support: grant requests for equipment totaled \$18 million. Extend *Healthy Kids, Healthy Schools* grants in the capital budget to support school efforts to cook healthier meals for kids.

### **Map Food Insecurity & Track Performance in Federal Nutrition Programs:**

USDA issues an annual report on hunger across the U.S. that falls short in helping us understand where and who hunger is hitting in our own communities. Including food security in the state's BRFSS survey provides local hunger data disaggregated by geography, race/ethnicity and household characteristics. State agencies managing federal nutrition programs will also report on how they are meeting national standards of participation, and summarize the actual and potential federal dollars that support our state and local communities with these programs. Together, these data will equip decision-makers at all levels with information to develop targeted strategies to better address hunger in our communities.

### **Fix Our State's Tax System to Create a Healthy, Prosperous and Hunger-free Washington**

Our state's tax system is upside down and unsustainable: low income and middle class families pay more than their fair share in taxes, and it puts us behind in our state's responsibilities. Closing loopholes and creating a more equitable tax code gives our state more resources to invest in the foundations (food, housing, schools and health care) that benefit all Washingtonians – especially those who need it most.

**For more information, contact:**

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## Legislative Issues We Support:

### Strengthen TANF Program for Low Income Families with Children:

Temporary Aid to Needy Families (TANF) provides cash assistance and an array of work support services to low income families with children designed to promote family economic stability. We support three key strategies to strengthen our state's TANF program:

- **Restore the TANF grant** cuts so families have more money to meet basic needs.
- **Increase the asset limit for vehicles** so families can benefit from TANF and keep a reliable car.
- **Reduce intergenerational poverty and child trauma** by transforming the TANF Oversight Taskforce Committee so they can effectively identify and invest in policies that effectively target poverty's root causes.

### Protect Access to Affordable Housing for Low Income People:

Food insecurity and housing insecurity are tightly linked. One way to fight hunger is to ensure people have adequate, affordable housing. We support key strategies to protect access to housing:

- **Strengthen homelessness funding:** eliminate the sunset date and increase the amount for document recording fees - the largest source of funding for housing programs, and scheduled to disappear. Without this, Washington faces a loss of nearly \$70 million in housing funds – exactly at the time we need more resources to address the housing crisis facing every county.
- **Ban Source of Income Discrimination** by landlords unwilling to rent to people with Housing Choice (Section 8) vouchers, Social Security income, veterans' housing subsidies, disability income, etc. This discrimination has a significant impact on communities who rely on housing subsidies to make ends meet – the same communities who are at highest risk for hunger.

### Improve Access to Jobs with the Fair Chance Act

This bill will “ban the box” that asks about convictions on initial job applications, so a person can be judged first on their qualifications and then have a chance to explain their past. This policy boosts employment and reduces recidivism, saving the state money in both prisons and social services – including anti-hunger programs that are needed when households can't find a job or earn enough to meet basic needs.

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## Our Ongoing Commitment:

### Protect Investments in Nutrition, Health, and Economic Stability for People in Need:

Our state has created innovative programs and proactive policies that help fight hunger and poverty in our communities. As lawmakers act to improve education, mental health services and more, it is essential to **protect funding for basic needs services** such as Emergency Food Assistance Program, State Food Assistance, Farmers Market Nutrition Programs, affordable housing, HENS/ABD and other programs for low-income people so these programs remain effective in fighting hunger and poverty.

For more information, contact:

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