2020 Legislative Agenda

Food & Nutrition Priorities

Sustain Funding for Fruits and Vegetables Access for Families on WIC & SNAP

Low income families know and want to eat the fresh fruits and vegetables that help them be healthier, but affordability and access are significant barriers.

- **Add $1.3 million to the State Fruit & Vegetable Incentives Program** to prevent scaling back programs that help SNAP shoppers buy more fruits and vegetables at farmers markets and grocery stores. These programs have a proven track record of increasing fruits and vegetable consumption, improving health, and reducing food insecurity for 35,000 low-income Washingtonians statewide.

- **Support HB 2262/SB 6309**, to raise the farmers market voucher amount for families on WIC from $20 to $32. These vouchers supplement WIC benefits for fresh produce for 140,000 households while supporting our local growers.

Expand School Participation in Universal Meals for Low Income Students

For many low-wage, working families, it’s a struggle to afford the cost of school lunch, even at a reduced price, when earnings are spread thin to cover the rent, child care, transportation, and other essentials. We need solutions that provide consistent access to nutritious meals while providing resources to schools to meet this need so that all of our students get the nutrition they need to meet their full potential.

- **Support HB 2660** to Expand School Use of the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP), a federal provision that allows high poverty, high need schools to do away with the paperwork of school meal applications and focus on providing nutritious meals for all students. Washington ranks 45th in the nation in utilizing CEP—we can and must do better for our kids.

- **Support 1892**, to eliminate the lunch co-pay for low-income students so they can focus on learning, not on how they’ll pay to eat.

Improve the Capacity of Washington’s Emergency Food System to Feed Our Neighbors

- **Build Infrastructure & Capacity** to help Washington’s food banks and meal programs that are facing critical cold storage issues for nutritious but highly perishable food products. A $500,000 one-time investment for grants and rebates will help at all levels of the system from refrigerators for small front-line programs to commercial-sized and mobile chill space for larger food banks and distributors.

- **Add $100,000 to expand Farm to Food Pantry**, an innovative program, helping to build stepping stones for new or small growers while putting agency in the hands of food pantries to increase the availability of fresh, locally grown food for families in need.

Formalize Washington’s Food Policy Forum (SB 6091/HB 1731)

It’s time to pass legislation that will formalize and fund convening this advisory body made up of agriculture commissions, state agencies, and anti-hunger advocates with a focus on building a healthier food system in Washington State.

For more information contact Christina Wong, Public Policy Director

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Hunger persists in households that lack sufficient income and resources to cover all of their essential needs. If we want to end hunger we must ensure that all Washingtonians have their basic needs met.

**Housing and Homelessness**

- **Increase funding for the Housing & Essential Need Program** to provide transitional rental assistance for individuals on social security.

- **Reduce housing instability by strengthening protections for renters and preventing housing discrimination**. We support efforts to ensure that landlords cannot evict tenants without a just cause (HB 2453/ SB6379), expanding the time period that tenants have to pay move-in costs to three months (HB 1694), and the Housing Justice Bill (SB6490) to prohibit denying a qualified tenant based on their dismissed charges, successful diversion, expungements, juvenile records, or certificate of restored opportunity.

**Access to Affordable Health Care**

- We support efforts to **increase access to affordable, quality dental care** with the expansion of mid-level providers that can provide affordable, quality preventive care. **Support HB 1317**.

**Promoting Economic Stability**

- **Finish the work of 1603**: remove the punitive TANF policies that have cut off access to cash support and workforce training for eligible families with children living in deepest poverty. We support the effort to allow families that are playing by the rules to qualify for hardship extensions to time limits, eliminate the full-family sanction, and reorienting policies to encourage compliance so more families can get the services they need to build a pathway out of poverty. **Support HB 2441/SB 6478**.

- **Expand and fund the Working Families Tax Credit** which gives low-wage earners a refund of a portion of their sales tax payments, providing a much needed influx of cash to pay for food, the rent, car repairs, and other essential needs. This is the state’s equivalent of the federal Earned Income Tax Credit which is the most effective anti-poverty program, the benefits of which should be extended to immigrant workers (HB 2521/SB 6557).

**Washington needs a more balanced tax code**: a healthier, hunger free Washington is within our reach if we make these sound investments in food and anti-poverty priorities, but you can’t get something for nothing. Northwest Harvest joins with other organizations, calling on our Legislature to clean up our outdated tax code so that we have sustainable revenue to restore our safety net and make much needed investments to expand access to essential needs services for eligible, struggling households.