PRESIDENT’S BUDGET PUTS HUNGRY WASHINGTONIANS AT RISK

Statement by Shelley Rotondo, CEO, Northwest Harvest

(Seattle, WA – May 24, 2017) The President’s FY18 budget proposal released yesterday is a direct attack on our social services safety net, proposing roughly $2.5 trillion in cuts to programs that help struggling families, seniors, and people with disabilities do basic things like pay for health care and put food on their tables.

These programs are proven effective and make critical differences for the 42 million Americans, including 874,782 Washingtonians, who have been left behind in the depths of poverty despite the slow economic recovery. The 1 out of 8 Washingtonians who struggle with poverty will feel these cuts even more intensely in our state where only a fraction of the over $10 billion that has been cut from our state’s budget during the recession has been restored.

The President’s budget proposes slashing the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, Basic Food or “food stamps”) by 25% or $193 billion over the next 10 years. A large part of these cuts would come from shifting costs to states to pay 25% of SNAP benefits by 2023. The intention is to incentivize states to tighten eligibility requirements and cut benefits that currently amount to a little over $4 per individual per day. These cuts hurt all of us because SNAP is a driving force for local economies, generating economic activity for small independent grocers, retailers, and Washington farmers. The Washington Budget & Policy Center estimates that by 2025, our Legislature would have to find $725 million per biennium to make up for the loss of federal dollars. If left unfunded, the local economic impact would be the loss of nearly $650 million per year.

This budget also proposes a whopping $800 billion in cuts from Medicaid on top of the $880 billion in cuts to this program that would result from the American Health Care Act that was passed in the House last month. They would also suffer from cuts to housing, cash assistance for families with children, and other basic necessities.

These cuts are unacceptable and unconscionable. We strongly urge Congress to reject these cuts and to respond with responsible budget plans that provide comprehensive solutions, including protecting and strengthening the safety net, thereby ensuring a brighter, better future for all of us.

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ABOUT NORTHWEST HARVEST

Northwest Harvest is Washington’s home-grown food bank distributor. Each month, Northwest Harvest provides more than two million nutritious meals and supports a statewide network of more than 375 food banks, meal programs, and high-need schools – focusing on consistent, nutritious, culturally-sensitive foods critical to both the body and mind. Throughout its 50 years, Northwest Harvest has grown from a project of local social activists to its position today as the leader in fighting hunger in the state of Washington.