

2021 Legislative Agenda



Food & Nutrition Priorities

Expand the purchasing power of SNAP:

SNAP is our first line of defense against hunger, helping low-income people afford basic nutrition. The economic fallout from COVID-19 has triggered an 11% increase to Washington's SNAP caseload while at the same time, food prices have gone up over 5%. We can help families afford more nutritious food, including Washington grown fruit and vegetables that helps stimulate our rural economies, by **supporting SNAP match programs used at farmers markets and grocery stores (\$3 million)** and using federal options and dollars to **provide transitional SNAP benefits (HB 1151, \$989,000)** to help families afford both food and other necessities as they recover from economic setbacks.

Increase resources for food banks:

Food banks across our state are struggling to keep up with dramatic increases in need—as much as 30% to 300%—while at the same time, experiencing decreases in food donations and increased costs for food procurement due to supply chain disruptions. We can secure **more nutritious food, increase capacity for safe storage and distribution**, fund **wholesale purchasing contracts with Washington growers** for food pantries, and innovate collaborations that **build flexibility across food supply chains** to redirect food to targeted areas of need with an additional **\$23.1 million for WSDA's Emergency Food Assistance Program**.

Support increased access to fruit and vegetables for low-income families:

According to the UW/WSU WA Food Survey, 59% of food insecure respondents have children and 40% of respondents report worsened diets since the start of the pandemic. Fresh fruit and vegetables were listed in the top 10 food items to which respondents report decreased access. We can help low-income families with children eat more fruit and vegetables by **increasing funds for the WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program (\$3 million)**, support school efforts to source more nutritious and locally grown ingredients with **Farm to School to Family grants and produce boxes (\$4.4 million)** for school meals and summer meals distribution sites, and **eliminate the school lunch co-pay for all kids** so that kids can focus on learning, not whether they can afford to eat (**HB 1342**).

For more information, contact:

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2021 Support Agenda

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

Fund the **housing priorities in the Governor's budget** which provides \$758 million to support increasing safe and affordable housing and prevent homelessness, including increasing the Housing Trust Fund and providing rental assistance and **requiring a just cause for evictions (HB 1236)**.

Affordable Health Care

Expand access to affordable, quality, preventative, and basic dental care by supporting the **statewide expansion of dental therapists (SB 5142)**. Dental therapists are recruited and trained from communities that have low access to dental health care so that more low-income people can access the oral health needed to eat.

Promote Economic Stability

Support the work of the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges in providing trained professionals to support **connecting income eligible students to SNAP and the Basic Food Employment and Training** program which provides case management and critical support to help students succeed, laying the foundation for job success. Funding for these navigators draws down federal dollars. **(\$6 million from State Fund/50% federal match.)**

Cash assistance helps low-income people pay for basic necessities including food, housing, utilities, car repairs, diapers, and medical bills. Cash assistance provides flexibility for households to prioritize and meet their most basic needs during tough economic setbacks, so that families can stay healthy, housed, and ready to return to work as our economy improves. We can help promote economic stability to weather the economic crisis for struggling families by **providing recovery rebates** (through **funding the Working Families Tax Credit, HB 1297**), adding support to the **Immigrant Workers Relief Fund, expanding access to TANF** for families with children **(SB 5214)**, and **funding a pilot for a Universal Basic Income** program.

Washington needs new and sustainable revenue to prevent harmful cuts to essential needs programs and help us through the long-term economic recovery. 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.

Northwest Harvest is a food justice organization, focused on creating more equitable access to nutritious food for all in Washington. Last year, we provided over 2 million meals per month throughout our state. Our support agenda addresses important policy solutions and investments to address housing and homelessness, access to affordable health care, and promote economic stability to help struggling households afford their basic needs and food so they don't go hungry.