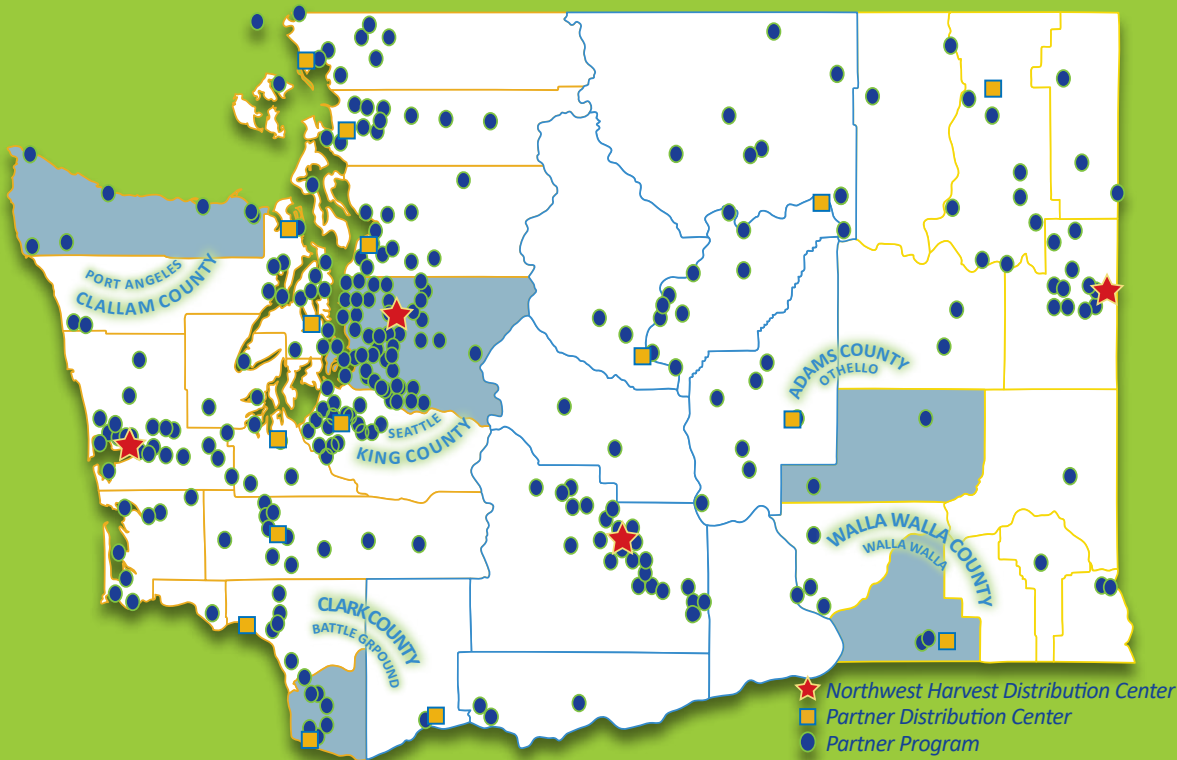


Focus on Food Security: *Working Towards a Hunger-Free Washington*

Northwest Harvest's Focus Group Report 2017

**FEEDING OUR NEIGHBORS IN NEED STATEWIDE THROUGH A NETWORK OF 375
FOOD BANKS, MEAL PROGRAMS AND HIGH-NEED SCHOOLS.**



NORTHWEST HARVEST

Northwest Harvest is Washington's own statewide hunger relief agency. Our mission is leading the fight for hungry people statewide to have access to nutritious food while respecting their dignity and promoting good health. Our vision is ending hunger in Washington.

Last fiscal year we distributed 33 million pounds of food to a network of 375 food banks, meal programs and high-need schools across the state.

CONTENTS:

Introduction	3
Clallam County	4
Adams County	6
King County	8
Walla Walla County	10
Clark County	12
Conclusions/ Recommendations	14
Process and Poverty Measures	18
Annotated References	19

Focus on Food Security: Working Towards a Hunger-Free Washington

When Northwest Harvest was founded 50 years ago, it was originally envisioned to be a short-term solution to fill in the gaps that caused hunger in our communities. Though our journey has been longer than anticipated, we still work towards a vision of ending hunger in Washington. The solutions to hunger are at our fingertips if we work together to enact and invest in the policy decisions that help all of us have access to affordable, healthy food.

We play our part in this work by providing nutritious food to a network of 375 food pantries, meal programs, and high-need schools, while working diligently in the halls of Olympia and Washington, D.C. to advocate for the solutions that help reduce hunger and poverty. At the heart of our work, from 1967 to today, are the people in need whom we are proud to serve freely, no questions asked.

The client, or participant, voice is integral to informing our policy agenda and illustrating the importance for lawmakers to make the right policy decisions. Each year, for the last ten years, we issue this report to tell stories of clients from five different food pantries in our statewide network. They speak openly and earnestly about the barriers they experience and their

resiliency and innovation to survive.

This year we heard stories of increasing homelessness. We heard this not only in the focus group we conducted at our own Cherry Street Food Bank, located in Seattle's First Hill neighborhood, but we also saw this growing crisis at our other focus groups in Clark, Clallam, Adams, and Walla Walla Counties.

We are thankful to the staff and volunteers for their assistance with helping us set up our focus groups: Kim Southern, Cherry Street Food Bank; Jessica Hernandez, Port Angeles Food Bank; Sharon Mobley, Othello Food Bank; Gwyn Frasco, Food Pantry Shelf of Walla Walla; and Elizabeth Cerveney and Carolyn Waldron of the North County Community and Battle Ground Adventist Community Services Food Banks.

Lastly, but most importantly, we are grateful to the 67 participants who opened their hearts to share their experiences and advice with us. You inspire and drive us in our work to make Washington a healthy, hunger-free place for all.



Shelley Rotondo, Chief Executive Officer

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Access previous years' reports at:

northwestharvest.org/Focus-on-Food-Security

INTRODUCTION



A thriving community is built on a foundation of health and wellbeing. Our children must be healthy to focus on learning and be active in play; our businesses and industries need robust, productive workers; we benefit from the advice and counsel of our seniors, who must be flourishing to be independent and active in mind and in body. Our communities are healthy when all of us are healthy, and the foundation to good health is access to affordable and nutritious food.

But too many people in Washington aren't able to reach their full potential for health and well-being because they are struggling to make ends meet. With limited income and resources, they are skipping meals to pay the rent, to put gas in their cars to get to work, to make sure that their children always have something to eat.

Ours is a state of ups and downs: in 2015, our poverty rate fell below that of the national average¹, and despite a decrease in our state's overall rate of hunger, hunger still persists at a higher level than

before the recession. In Washington²:

- 1 in 5 children live in a household that struggles against hunger.
- Nearly 1 in 8 Washingtonians does not get enough food to eat.
- Hunger persists at significantly higher rates in rural households, in households headed by a single parent, and in black and Hispanic households.

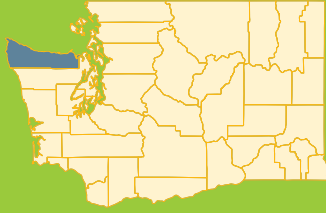
Our annual *Focus on Food Security* report brings out the personal stories that illustrate these statistics. In this, our tenth edition of this report, we visited with 67 food bank participants in Adams, Clark, Cllallam, King, and Walla Walla Counties. Across our state, we heard stories about experiencing or being on the precipice of homelessness. Parents told us about the sacrifices they are making to ensure their children eat and protect them from experiencing the deepest wounds of poverty. Seniors told us of the difficulties of living in retirement when a lifetime of work gets you Social Security payments that can't cover the rent and basic needs for food. In all these cases, participants

pray that no emergency will arise, because there will be no way to pay for it.

It doesn't have to be this way. We have the tools at our fingertips to help raise up a solid floor on which these families and individuals can stand: our system of public food assistance programs help make nutritious food more accessible. Strengthening these programs will fortify these individuals, helping to keep them healthy for school, work, and contributing to our communities.

We hope you will read their stories, told to us with open hearts and sincerity. These stories lay the foundation for the policy recommendations in our conclusion. What we ask of you is to hear our call to action, and build the political will to make these improvements a reality so that Washington can be healthier and an even better place to live for all.

CLALLAM COUNTY



Population: Port Angeles—19,448³;
Clallam County—73,486⁴

Port Angeles

Hunger can easily be hidden in the tourist town of Port Angeles, but for low-income residents, the food bank is the heart and soul of the community.

"I volunteer here because Jessica (the food bank director) said it's all about nutrition with dignity," said Sally, who also uses the food bank. High quality food is important to her because of the allergies that resulted from a toxic brain injury. "It's good food, checked all the time for quality. Everyone in distribution are just lovely people."

"You're not treated like a beggar here. You're not treated like you're getting a handout," explained Charles, a native southerner and a father of three boys. "Does anyone want to



TRACEY

"Towards the end of the month, you make do. You try to arrange meals you're going to have long about the last week of the month. It gets real, real tight. You don't know what you're going to eat."

come here? No. None of us want to come here, but here, you walk in, you feel like a real human being."

Being treated with dignity can be taken for granted, but it provides respite when you otherwise feel stuck, unable to make ends meet despite working hard to do so.

Shelby recently moved to town and has a 9-year-old son. He said, "I pay \$1400/month in rent and bills combined. I'm scraping by with the help of this place. I live right in town and pay a lot in electricity and water. You have to make \$3000/month just to be ok and that's still coming to the food bank. I'm spinning wheels in the mud and not getting anywhere."

Shelby isn't alone in finding the cost of housing to be too high. Tracey has moved away and come back to Port Angeles several times since 1956. "Housing is ridiculous," she exclaimed. "I'm living in a trailer. It was supposed to be put in the junk yard two years ago. The door doesn't fit right. The bedroom walls are all torn off. The shower doesn't work. The floor is rotted, so they put plywood on it—that's the housing that I pay over \$500/month for. That's the cheapest I could find."

Assistance from Section 8 doesn't help make housing more affordable if landlords aren't willing to rent to voucher holders. Added Charles, "The few houses and apartments available that I can actually afford will not take Sec. 8. I've got a voucher, but there's no place I can use it."

This kind of discrimination makes it difficult for tenants to speak up about

repairs. Sheena, a recently divorced mother of two pre-teen boys is struggling after getting laid off from work as a health aide. She stated, "Even if you get the house, we got evicted because we complained too many times. The refrigerator they gave us kept breaking and we wanted a new one; the furnace broke. We paid our rent on time, but they come around and evict you, and if you have an eviction on your record then no one is going to rent to you, even if it's not your fault."

The final link in this chain of events is to end up homeless. Vincent works as a caretaker for adults with disabilities. He said, "A lot of people around here live in the woods and can't afford anything. They can't get a reference. They're not going to find anything."

Another unmet necessity that contributes to the feeling of being stuck is the need for reliable transportation to get around town. "It's tougher in a small town with no public transportation, and this is spread out too," said John, a resident of Port Angeles for 22 years.

Rebecca lives outside of town. She said, "We live 50 miles from the closest grocery store. We go grocery shopping one time a month."

Reliable transportation and child care are necessary expenses to maintain employment, but for many parents who work low wage jobs, finding affordable and safe care can be difficult. Many of our participants rely on and love the local Boys and Girls Club but could not scrounge up additional fees for field trips in the summer. "If you don't pay the money, then your kid doesn't go," explained Shelby. "When they stay home, they're not very active. They tend to eat more. Boredom creates hunger."

Donna and her sister moved to Port Angeles from California. Both are in their 50s and served in the armed forces.

"My sister is a disabled vet. I was an Air National Guard. I was in New York when the towers fell," described Donna. "We've always worked 40-60 hours a week; now we can't. I've got medical things. That's why I volunteer here at this food bank and at the Salvation Army. I try to give back to the people who help us."

Donna and her sister were homeless, living in her sister's pick-up truck, after their landlord in California sold the building in which they were living. They got connected to veterans benefits and services right away, but finding a home was difficult to do while homeless, without a reference from their absentee former landlord, and without the money to spare for gas to look at places. She explained, "What they do is they give you a list, and they tell you go and look at these places. How am I supposed to go look at it when I have no money?"

Luckily, they were able to find an RV to rent, owned by a woman who lets them put their monthly rental payments towards buying their trailer. They have stable housing which will help, but they are still struggling. "When you're homeless for two years, you're catching up. The RV is great, but it needs all these repairs, and we just don't have it."

Donna and her sister are grateful for but don't want to have to depend on public assistance and charitable handouts. "It's not easy to walk through that door, especially when you've worked all your life and were in the military," she said. "Basically I beg people to help. That is a degrading feeling."

"Quit trying to criminalize the poor and homeless," she asks of her elected officials. "We're homeless vets; we served our country. We're not all alcoholics, drug addicts—we're trying to save our money."



DONNA

Other parents also feel the pain of increased food costs during summer months when free and reduced price school meals aren't available. Charles said, "In all honestly, we simply reduce the quality of food we eat for three months so we can have more."

Public assistance programs and services are intended to help families bridge the gaps, to help build a solid foundation on which a family can build a path to prosperity, but finding out about those resources and applying for them has moved increasingly online. "They tell you to find out online, but we don't have online," stated Vincent. "You

can go to the library, but there's no guarantee you can get online. They look at you like you're stupid or don't understand, but we can't afford it."

Our focus group participants call on their elected officials to invest in programs and services and in the means to help low-income people access them. It takes a joint effort to help families in need get unstuck so that they can reach their full potential.

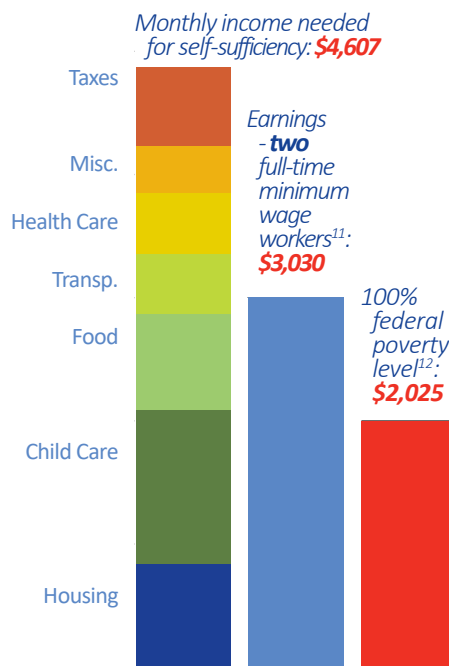
"Stop treating poverty like it's a crime, like I did it on purpose," said Charles.

"Don't cut any programs whatsoever," advised Randy, "increase every one."

CLALLAM COUNTY:

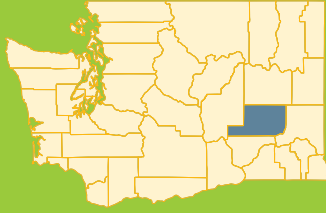
Unemployment (Oct. 2016) ⁵	7.5%
Social Security recipients (2015) ⁶	33.8% (24,825)
Schoolchildren eligible for subsidized meals (Oct. 2015) ⁷ Clallam County	52.5% (8,295)
WIC recipients (2015) ⁸	3.5% (2,540)
<i>Total served (Nov. 2016)⁹:</i>	
▪ Basic Food (SNAP)	12,353
▪ Medical assistance	3,827
▪ TANF cash assistance	617

Monthly income needed for self-sufficiency¹⁰: **\$4,607**



Left bar of graph shows income for a family of four to meet basic needs in Clallam County.

ADAMS COUNTY



Population: Othello—7,809³;
Adams County—19,254⁴

Othello

Our Othello focus group included participants who rely on the food bank and the aides who help take care of them.

“I work for the agency, take care of them, help them go out. I go to the food bank, get food once a month, prepare the food, do the washing,” explained Florinda who has worked as a caretaker for 28 years.

The local Area Agency on Aging provides caretakers to low-income seniors to provide them with reliable and safe transportation. Maria is a widow who is caring for her 11-year-old grandson: “I have to rely on my caregiver,” she said. “I can hardly walk, can’t go to the store.”

“I rely on the caretaker too,” added Mario, who moved to Othello from Nebraska. “No car, don’t drive. That’s why we really don’t get around very much.”



“Do not cut back on any food programs. A lot of people need it. They survive on these programs.”

The caretakers also help clients shop with their Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP or “food stamps”) benefits at the local grocery store, but many of them, due to age or disability, get assistance from Social Security. As such, they only qualify for the minimum SNAP allotment. “I only get \$16 for food stamps,” stated Mario. “It’s so very hard! It’s a challenge to make ends meet.”

“I’ve run out of food stamps before the end of the month,” said Arlene, who grew up in Othello but has lived everywhere around the country. Arlene added that she usually exhausts her monthly food assistance before the last week of the month.

SNAP benefits are already frequently inadequate and many recipients have already seen cuts to their benefits. They worry about what might happen to them if Congress cuts the program even more. Arlene declared, “It keeps getting lowered. I’m really scared that they’ll lower it more, and I don’t know how I’ll survive if they do.”

SNAP helps eligible low-income participants buy food in order to help stretch their income to cover other basic necessities like housing. Budget’s can’t stretch when housing and other costs are high. Arlene’s disability benefits give her an income of \$700 each month, but she pays over half of it—\$450—in rent for her apartment.

Participants must find other ways to stretch budgets while facing high costs for necessities.

Informal networks between friends and neighbors are used to share food at no cost. Allan uses the food bank and in

return, gives back much of the fruits and vegetables he grows in his garden. He said, “Someone says, ‘I have an apricot tree that I’m not going to pick,’ and we are on it.”

But sharing and gleaned from others isn’t a reliable resource, nor does it ensure the variety of food that is needed for a well-rounded, palatable, healthy diet. Allan added, “The opportunity thing—it doesn’t always come up. You might end up short on potatoes. Take advantage of what you can get at the time; use and share.”

Another alternative for stretching a budget is to cut down on utility costs. Arlene stated, “I turn my thermostat down in the wintertime—turn it way down low at night. Use lots of covers. That takes a lot of money out of your electric bill.”

For others, the alternative is facing the lonely reality that to do anything will cost money, so it’s better to do nothing at all. “I stay home,” said Dawn, who works at a local nursery, a change in career after building yachts in Westport. To avoid any temptation to spend money, she ruefully added, “Stay out of Walmart.”

All of the participants rely on the food bank to make ends meet. Although they are grateful for the food bank’s generosity, they had to admit that the assistance in the end amounts to not much food. “I portion out, because you don’t get a lot,” said Francelia, a retiree who is still paying the costs for lung surgery that she had last year. She further explained, “You get one can of corn, some potatoes. It’s limited.”

And for Francelia, the food from the food bank must play a bigger role for her diet because she does not qualify for food stamps.

Participants recognize that the food bank is doing what it can to meet the serious need, because cuts to public assistance have shifted more of the burden to the private sector. As Allan observed, “It sounds like the bottom

Living With Diabetes

In this focus group, we found that one-third of the participants are living with diabetes. They collectively shared stories of the difficulties of managing their diabetes on a diet provided by insufficient SNAP benefits and food from the food bank.

“My challenge is that I just don’t have enough money to buy fresh fruits and meat,” Arlene said. “With Type 1 diabetes, you worry about these things. I’m very grateful for the food program—no doubt about it. I cannot survive without it.”

Pat agreed: “The food bank helps me out a lot. The juice I get, the fruits they give me, help me stay in balance,” he said. “I have a problem that I don’t eat enough. I get low blood sugar, and end up in the emergency room on a table.”

The most recent time Pat passed out from low blood sugar, he was in a park and was robbed while he was unconscious. He added, “I wake up not knowing where I’m at.”

But for Arlene, much of the food from the food bank has the opposite problem—too much sugar and glucose. “There’s so much I can’t use,” she said. “I can’t eat fruits, juices, cereals—a lot of stuff I give back. I use about a third of what they give away.”

Because many in the focus group are seniors with disabilities, they qualify for both Medicaid and Medicare. Having the insurance coverage helps supply them with testing strips, glucose meters, and medications, but cuts to these programs mean that they are not able to afford care needed for other health problems related to their diabetes.

“I had a couple of teeth removed,” described Pat. “I had to go to my dad because Medicaid/Medicare doesn’t cover those extractions. With diabetes, it’s just a matter of time until I have dentures! With my receding gums, eyesight slowly going—that’s life I suppose! Nothing good lasts forever.”



line to what I’m hearing is that the churches are picking up all the slack around here.”

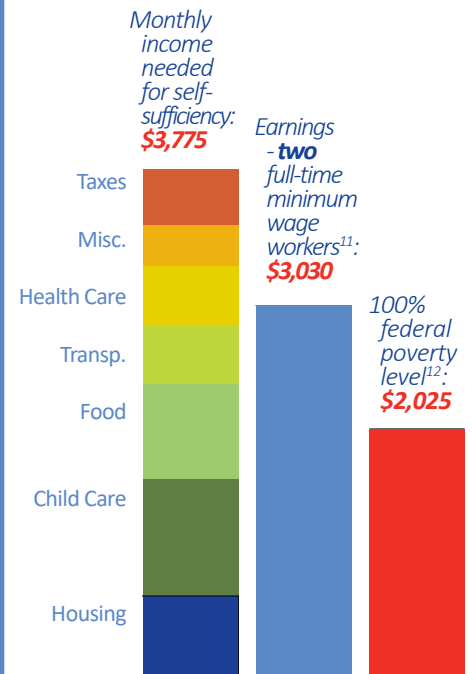
Participants believe that cuts to basic needs services are not the answer; rather, they see these as the priorities in which we must invest. Pat has a broad smile and a gravelly voice that betrays the years he has spent traveling up and down the coast working a variety of food industry jobs, everything from commercial fishing to harvesting potatoes. He urges lawmakers to find the political will to make these

investments: “I think that there’s some solutions out there if we look in the right places. I feel it’s not what our country can do for us but what we can do for our country in that aesthetic. We’re blessed with some of the best growing regions here in Washington. The food program is very important—the nourishment of growing children—that’s something our Congressmen should work or at least bridge the gap to reach those solutions.”

ADAMS COUNTY:

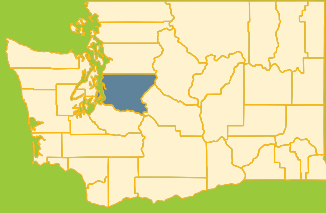
Unemployment (Oct. 2016) ⁵	5.1%
Social Security recipients (2015) ⁶	13.2% (2,535)
Schoolchildren eligible for subsidized meals (Oct. 2015) ⁷	80.5% (4,798)
WIC recipients (2015) ⁸	17% (3,282)
<i>Total served (Nov. 2016)⁹:</i>	
■ Basic Food (SNAP)	4,330
■ Medical assistance	741
■ TANF cash assistance	217

Monthly income needed for self-sufficiency¹⁰: \$3,775



Left bar of graph shows income for a family of four to meet basic needs in Adams County.

KING COUNTY



Population: Seattle—684,451³;
King County—2,117,125⁴

Seattle

Commuters traveling through Seattle's First Hill neighborhood on their way to downtown are familiar with the long lines of clients that form outside the gates of our own Cherry Street Food Bank. The line goes up a steep hill and around the block through all kinds of inclement weather. Some clients will test their balance by doing tai chi exercises as they wait; for others, the hill is a perilous barrier.

"There's a guy in a wheelchair who's scared to go down the hill," said Lafayette, who has ten living siblings. "I come back and get him a bag. I enjoy every bit of it."

For some of our participants, they must brave the steep climb up and down the hill, because they have no other options.



LOVELLA

"There are kids out there that are hungry, that are not getting the nutrition they need. And that's a damn shame."

Tina's voice betrays a hint of her New York background as she stated, "This is the only food bank that I go to. It's the closest to my home. I have arthritis in my kneecaps. It's very difficult for me to get around."

At the food bank, clients have a choice between shopping for meal ingredients or opting for a sack lunch, the latter of which is for those who would otherwise have to skip a meal to make ends meet or for individuals experiencing homelessness who do not have the facilities to store and prepare food.

"I'm one of the homeless guys, so I eat the sack lunches," said Tony who was born and raised in Seattle and frequently works temporary jobs. "The food is good here, but I feel bad for the elderly people here. There needs to be something different for the elderly, the disabled. They could come and get more."

In 2015, Seattle Mayor Ed Murray made national headlines when he declared homelessness in Seattle to be a state of emergency.⁵ One contributor to the homelessness epidemic is the difficulty of getting housing assistance.

Karen hails from Pennsylvania but avows that she is "not a Steelers fan." Having experienced homelessness herself, Karen has been discouraged from applying for a Sec. 8 voucher: "They always told me the list is too long—a two to three year waiting list," she said.

Even if one is lucky enough to get assistance, high rent in a competitive real estate market makes it impossible to

find a safe, affordable place. Autumn had been living on the streets for 3-4 years, but is staying with a friend who got a Sec. 8 voucher. Her friend, an amputee, uses a wheelchair. "The rent is so high with his portion he's supposed to pay—just under \$1200," she explained. "\$1350 is the cheapest apartment, and the ones on the list aren't exactly the greatest of places." Luckily, Autumn wrote to the caseworker who successfully got a 60 day extension so they could keep looking, but Autumn's friend is at risk of being out on the streets despite having a voucher.

One participant, thanks to a constellation of basic needs services, "recently got out of homelessness." Although Jack has managed to secure housing, it is the fragile but coordinated web of food programs that keeps him whole. "I'm on Social Security Disability and only get \$16 in food stamps," he said. "A lot of my income goes to my rent and medical bills. I totally depend on food banks. Out of seven days a week, I go to food banks five times a week and eat at churches too." Jack then explained that his minimum SNAP benefit allows him to "only cook at home for my spaghetti and my chicken with it a couple times of month," despite the added assistance of using coupons when he shops.

Other participants are like Jack, working hard to find ways to stretch their meager food stamps when faced with the challenge of high food costs. Derek lives near our food bank but our neighborhood does not have a large-scale grocery store within walkable distance. He travels the distance to spend his food stamps more wisely: "I don't use them at convenience stores. If I spend \$40-\$50 at Winco, I literally can eat good all week, and it's eating good food."

Karen's voice is soft, but she speaks with the confidence and humility of someone who has had to adapt and rise above losses that come with bad luck.

Karen worked for many years in county government. She retired from her job when she was diagnosed with brain cancer and told she had months to live. She spent all of her savings to get the most out of the time left to her. Little did she know that a change of luck for the better—an unexpected positive response to treatment—would mean she would get a second chance at life, but it means living on a much smaller fixed income of Social Security Disability with no cushion and an endless stack of medical bills.

"I was homeless for a year," said Karen. Priced out of renting in Seattle, Karen lives on Mercer Island and pays 75% of her income on her rent. The decision is worth it to her, since she is off the streets and in a safe, habitable apartment.

To get by, she uses the bare minimum in utilities: "No living room light on, kitchen off, bedroom off. No heater on, no fan on. No electric bills, no heat."

She also relies entirely on food banks, because she does not get food stamps. "I've learned to live with whatever Northwest Harvest gives me," she said. "Four chicken legs? I've learned how to make four chicken legs work for a month—one a week; I stretch it."

She gets by but would not recommend that life to others if they can get help from food stamps: "Make sure there's food to eat. Food banks are not open when they need food. Leave food stamps in their pockets. It makes it much better to vote, to make Seattle, the state of Washington, a better place."



"There's a farmers market that through the summer months, if you use food stamps, spend \$10, they can double the value, make it \$20," said Tina, describing the Fresh Bucks program that helps SNAP shoppers buy more fresh fruits and vegetables.

Smart shopping is one way to make food stamps last, but improvements to accurately capture monthly expenses could help increase this much needed benefit. "I get Social Security Disability, and I am not eligible for \$5 in food stamps,"

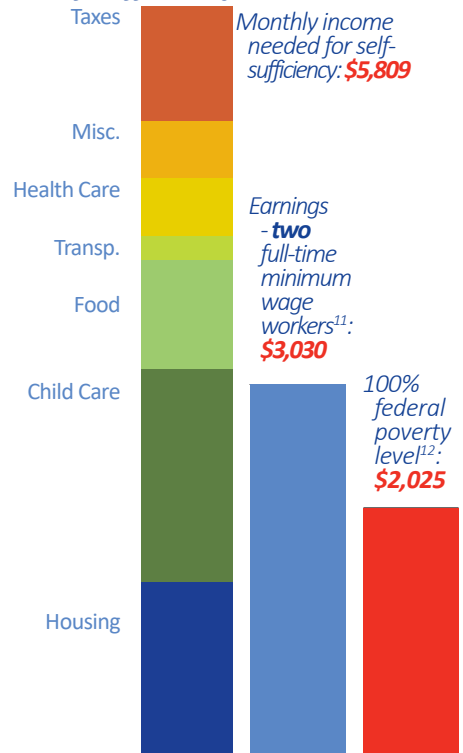
declared Karen. "They don't realize that my bills and rent take all that up. If I don't hit food banks up, I eat nothing."

The food bank is the final safety net: "When those gates are closed at 5 p.m., I see the importance of this place," said Derek. "When it ain't open, it's nice to know that gate will open on the next day. Someone all night is hungry, looking forward to that 9 a.m. gate opening. Don't take away the food bank please."

KING COUNTY:

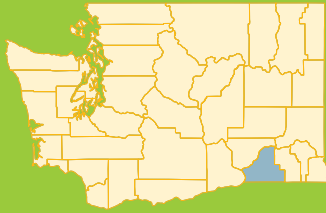
Unemployment (Oct. 2016) ⁵	3.7%
Social Security recipients (2015) ⁶	13.5% (284,770)
Schoolchildren eligible for subsidized meals (Oct. 2015) ⁷ King County	34.3% (283,891)
WIC recipients (2015) ⁸	9.3% (8,704)
<i>Total served (Nov. 2016)⁹:</i>	
■ Basic Food (SNAP)	198,492
■ Medical assistance	70,488
■ TANF cash assistance	12,861

Monthly income needed for self-sufficiency¹⁰: \$5,809



Left bar of graph shows income for a family of four to meet basic needs in King County.

WALLA WALLA COUNTY



Population: Walla Walla—32,237³;
Walla Walla County—60,338⁴

Walla Walla

Tourists love Walla Walla's wineries, but our focus group participants appreciate the variety of programs that help those in need.

"People here care," said Steven who moved here four years ago to live with his daughter until she recently left town for a new job. "They take really good care of homeless people, people who need food."

Our focus group participants spoke highly of many of the charitable programs in town but admit that some are not as welcoming.

"People have a really bad attitude about people going to these programs or getting food stamps," said Colleen who told us that despite having two Bachelors degrees, she has experienced homelessness and unemployment many times. She

described how one local organization will deny food to individuals caught panhandling for change "even though it is legal as long as it's not aggressive."

Dawnmarie, a recently widowed mother of 16 children and grandmother to 29, agreed that there should not be barriers to food assistance: "I'm very grateful for the help that I get," she said. "You don't come to a food bank unless you need food."

Colleen continued, asking service providers to consider how difficult it is to apply for and ask for help. "Put pride aside," she advised. "Adults can't get enough resources to take care of ourselves for survival needs. There's a lot of paperwork. They ask a lot of information about yourself and family."

The amount of time and information needed to apply for help feels even more burdensome when the assistance is minimal. Steven gets income from Social Security, and as a result, is eligible for the minimum in food assistance: "As a single man, my food stamps are not enough," he stated. "I get \$16. I don't know what to do about it. I don't want to whine about it, but it's not enough for me."

Inadequate food assistance means that participants have decreased purchasing power, and as a result, often have to make food buying decisions that they don't want to make. Dawnmarie explained, "Inexpensive foods that are cheaper and easier to buy aren't healthy."

Contrary to public perception, many of our participants want to eat healthy but can't afford the prices of healthier foods.

Some participants can supplement their food purchases with healthy food that they grow and preserve from their gardens. Kelly moved her family to Walla Walla from Spokane in 2000. She said, "I can anything I have in my garden. It's easier to cook with the canned goods, and the ones you can yourself are more healthy."

The food bank is another source of healthy supplemental food, but these items can pose health risks for people with medical issues. When Ginger was diagnosed with having a fatty liver, she went on a heavily restricted diet to significantly lower her intake of salts and fats, and as a result, she lost 50 pounds. "When you go to food banks," she explained, "I can't use canned foods, because they're high in salt. Packaged food is high in salt. The Pantry Shelf is good about giving out dried beans and lentils. I use them, but if I get canned, even rinsing them can't get rid of all the salt. It's hard for me to eat." She added that sometimes she is able to get canned food with no added salt, "but they can only do that if they have stuff to give."

Many of our focus group participants mentioned having health problems for which they were able to get treatment, because they had medical insurance. "I am grateful that the state of Washington decided to accept the Medicaid expansion program," declared Colleen. "As good as Apple Health is, it's way better than nothing."

Thanks to the Affordable Care Act, the uninsured rate in Washington state has declined by half, according to the Office of the Insurance Commissioner.⁶ In this focus group, only one person did not have health insurance, but her children were covered by Apple Health for Kids.

Still some participants do not get all the care they need because some devices



JANICE

"Don't cut the seniors. My mom—that's where most of her money goes—to the prescriptions, the insurance, and they cut them all the time! They cut benefits for social security and it makes it harder to make ends meet."

Child Nutrition

In Washington, 1 in 5 children live in a food insecure household, but many of these children may not miss a meal because of the sacrifices their parents make.

"In the last year, I go without so my kids and grandkids can have it," explained Kelly. "We don't have enough so they eat before I do. It's not good: I get sick, have to stay in bed. It's hard to be poor, hard on your mental health and physical life."

The summer months bring more food hardship for families with children: when school doors close, kids miss out on free or reduced price breakfasts and lunches. Parents must find a way to make up for the difference. "It's probably a \$300-\$400 difference monthly, just having them at home," said Melissa, who grew up in the area and is now raising her children here. "I fortunately have two jobs, one of which is tips, and that carries us through."

Melissa may be able to foot the bills but doing so means working "60-80 hours/week of work with two jobs." For Dawnmarie, the need to make three meals a day instead of just one "was one of those breaks that caused us to seek out the food bank," she said. "The kids were home for a few weeks recently, and we didn't have enough food."

The summer meals program is another valuable resource and all participants felt that it was accessible. Participants also lauded the WIC program but identified a gap: WIC is available until a child's 5th birthday, but not all children are eligible for kindergarten and school meals at the age of 5 if they are born after the cutoff date for school enrollment. "The WIC program is a wonderful program," stated Ginger. "I don't think it should stop at 5; it should go on. They're still hungry."



or medicines aren't covered, a result of budget cuts. "They don't check hearing," said Ginger. "Why bother if you can't afford a hearing aid?" Dalia added, "With Medicare we get the eye test for free but not the eye glasses."

Nonetheless, participants appreciated having health insurance since it eases the pressure on meeting other costs, such as housing. "Rent is really high in Walla Walla, and that's heat included," said Kelly. "Mine is \$850. I'm on disability. I get \$838—not enough for rent."

An added cost to finding housing is having the money to cover fees attached to

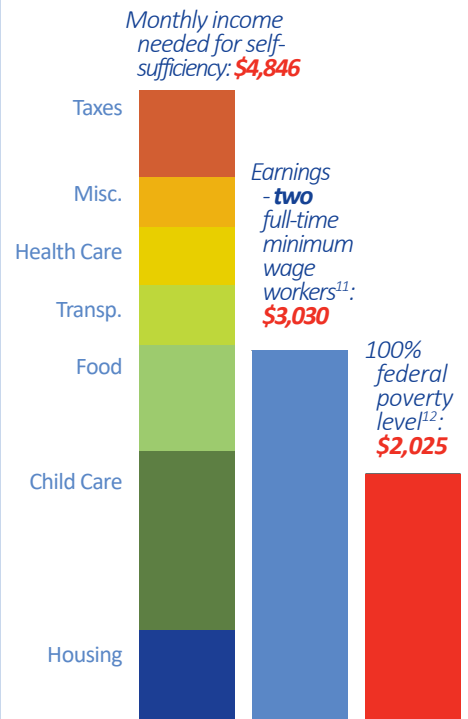
moving. "Even when working, when we were first starting out, there's no money for a first and last deposit," explained Dawnmarie, who described how she was homeless, couch surfing with friends or family for 13 years. "You're spending all your money for daily survival. It actually costs a lot of money being poor."

The costs of necessities weave together, and that's why participants ask for protection of all programs and services. "Any program—all are important," declared Irma, a mother of young children. "Every person, all persons are important."

WALLA WALLA COUNTY:

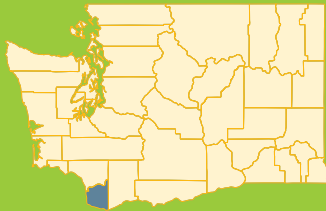
Unemployment (Oct. 2016) ⁵	5.0%
Social Security recipients (2015) ⁶	20.5% (12,390)
Schoolchildren eligible for subsidized meals (Oct. 2015) ⁷	55.3% Walla Walla County (9,025)
WIC recipients (2015) ⁸	4.6% (2,777)
Total served (Nov. 2016)⁹:	
▪ Basic Food (SNAP)	9,126
▪ Medical assistance	2,715
▪ TANF cash assistance	519

Monthly income needed for self-sufficiency¹⁰: \$4,846



Left bar of graph shows income for a family of four to meet basic needs in Walla Walla County.

CLARK COUNTY



Population: Battle Ground—19,407³;
Clark County—459,495⁴

Battle Ground

Our focus group in Battle Ground gave us an opportunity to learn more about a trend we are seeing statewide: more individuals in food bank lines are securing jobs, but their jobs do not pay them enough to make ends meet.

Emily grew up in nearby Hazel Dell and works as a cashier at a large chain supermarket. “Like everyone else, we’re struggling,” she said. “I’m just trying to take care of my daughter.”

With a recent raise of 5 cents, Emily makes just barely above the minimum wage, or what amounts to less than \$10 an hour. Trying to keep up with rising costs for basic necessities is incredibly stressful. “The situation here, it sucks,” she vented. “I’m grateful for what I’ve

got, but something’s got to change. The gas prices, rent’s gone way up, insurance, everything! I’m paying all that out of my salary plus taking care of my kid.”

One of those rising costs is for housing. April works as a home health aide. She is raising her 8-year-old daughter and recently, her 21-year-old son moved back to Battle Ground. He, his partner, and their baby live part-time in April’s home. April is prioritizing paying more for housing for the safety of her family and grandchild. “I’m living way out of my means,” she said. “I can find a cheaper place for \$800, but it’s a terrible place with a slum lord. I could move, but I can’t find first and last month’s security.”

April’s considered finding a roommate, perhaps another single mother, to cut down on costs, but she’s wary. “Pairing strangers up? You have to be careful with a kid,” she declared. “I feel stuck.”

Virginia also feels stuck, unable to move from renting a place she can no longer afford. Married and raising children, Virginia recently found a job as a cashier at a grocery store after months of unemployment. She estimates that 80% of their income goes towards keeping a roof over their heads. She explained, “I had a really good job that paid \$27/hour, but now I’m making \$9.72. I can’t afford \$2200 rent anymore, but I’m just stuck. You could be homeless at any point.”

With so much being spent on housing and other necessities, these women are grateful for programs like SNAP

and the school lunch program, programs that help them stretch their small incomes further by providing food and meals for their families.

Emily, Virginia, and April’s children all qualify for free lunches and breakfasts at school, but right now, their children are only able to eat lunch. Breakfast is served before the start of the school day, but it’s difficult to get their children to school in time to eat. “It’s because they take the school bus,” said Virginia. “They miss breakfast, then they make them have lunch at 10, and then they’re home at 4, so they’re starving.”

“(My daughter’s) eating breakfast at home,” added April. “I would love the help of getting her to school and eating there, but there’s just no time.”

Food stamps are a lifeline, providing much needed assistance for meals at home, and any cuts in benefits are keenly felt. “I’m in the camp definitely of not getting something for nothing,” declared April. “If I can give back, I do. I’m very proud. I don’t want to have help if I don’t need it, but they make you feel like if I work more, you take my food stamps away. That’s a double whammy standard!”

Unfortunately, April doesn’t have a choice about working more, even though she wants to do so. She reported that her hours were reduced, and under labor laws, that could put earned benefits like paid sick leave in jeopardy.

Having reduced hours means that you have little choice but to accept when the boss calls and demands that you work a last-minute shift. “You know I have to work so you take full advantage of it,” said April. “I can’t say no.”

Erratic schedules are a struggle when you are a single mom. Emily explained,



“It’s not difficult to get yourself put on the list (for a Sec. 8 voucher), but finding a place and moving in is extremely difficult. If you don’t stay on top of it, you’ll fall off of the list and not even know it. It’s extremely difficult.”

Our Battle Ground focus group also included some seniors who live on a fixed income, including Eileen who talked about this life adjustment to retirement. “I’ve always worked,” she said. “I lost my husband 6 years ago. A year later, they rified me out of my job of twenty years. I get Social Security. I volunteer at the food bank because I’ve never taken anything for nothing.”

Learning to budget within the confines of a fixed income. “I can’t buy what I want anymore,” she said. “I have to buy what I need. That’s a big, big transition when you get older. It’s a total regeneration of your life.”

Eileen’s Social Security payments are just a little too high for her to qualify for any more than the \$16 minimum food stamp benefit. She does not think it’d be worth the trouble to get just \$16 in food assistance. “I don’t need to jump through the hoops to get \$16,” she declared. “I don’t want to give my whole life history for \$16.”

Still, taking the steps to apply for SNAP might help Eileen identify other resources that could help her stretch her income. She described a medical emergency that might not have been so life-threatening if she knew about other resources for help. “Over a year ago, I broke both my legs,” she said. “I only had a little bit of money in the bank. I just sat with my leg up on the couch with a hot pad on it for three months. It turned black past my knee cap.”

She learned about the existence of charity care programs after the fact. “When you’ve worked your whole life, paid your own way, you don’t know what resources are out there,” she said. “You don’t know who will tell you. You’re either educated by paying for it or by paying for it.” Since life events dramatically altered her income, she asks that lawmakers prioritize helping all who are in need. She said, “Take care of everyone, regardless of their circumstances.”



EILEEN

“The way jobs are changing—cutting people out—I don’t have any solid time where I can plan for anything. They’ve been shorthanded, so I’ve been working seven days a week.”

“You can imagine the toll that takes on a mother’s head and heart,” added April. “I’m just trying to do what’s right. The kid’s looking at me, asking when are you going to be home? When can we hang out? What can you do?”

Protecting the programs that support basic needs and raising wages are ideas that these women suggested as things that lawmakers can do to help them

get by and take care of their children.

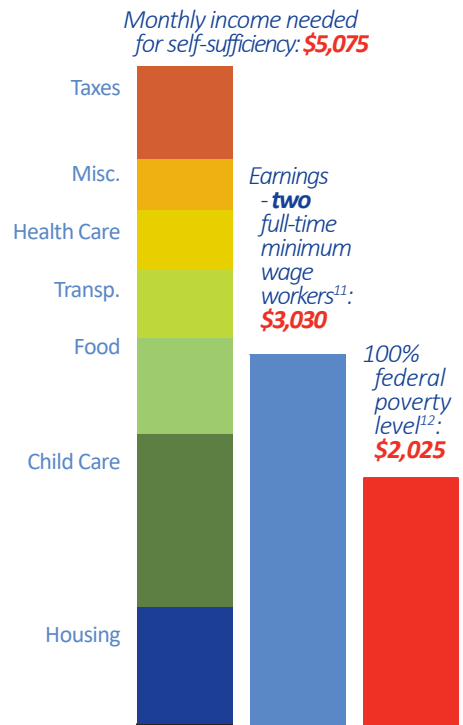
“I don’t understand why we have hunger in America,” declared April. “Of course we can’t cut programs that feed the hungry and poor! It’s a no brainer! From our land of plenty, it’s heartbreaking and ridiculous.”

“Either things need to go down or our pay needs to go up,” stated Emily. “It’s for my kid more than anything. Myself—I got to be there for her, but I want something for her, to put something aside for her.”

CLARK COUNTY:

Unemployment (Oct. 2016) ⁵	6.0%
Social Security recipients (2015) ⁶	17.6% (81,065)
Schoolchildren eligible for subsidized meals (Oct. 2015) ⁷	38.2% (77,365)
Clark County	
WIC recipients (2015) ⁸	3.6% (16,556)
Total served (Nov. 2016) ⁹ :	
■ Basic Food (SNAP)	62,391
■ Medical assistance	16,050
■ TANF cash assistance	3,841

Monthly income needed for self-sufficiency¹⁰: \$5,075



Left bar of graph shows income for a family of four to meet basic needs in Clark County.

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS

“How do you budget next to nothing? If anything changes—suddenly you get sick, get a flat tire, the cost of utilities go up, someone gets cut back on work hours—anything like that affects the food situation.”

—Colleen, Walla Walla

Strong, vibrant, and prosperous communities are built on the foundation of healthy individuals and families. When everyone has access to affordable, nutritious food, our children are healthier and able to focus on learning, their parents are able to find and sustain employment, and our seniors stay active and independent.

If we want to make this vision for a healthy Washington a reality, then our elected officials need to make smart policy decisions and strategic investments of public funds in the areas that help all of us to thrive together. These are our recommendations to move us closer towards that vision of ending hunger in Washington.

1. Restore and strengthen SNAP

- Expand exemptions to help retain benefits for certain unemployed adults without dependents

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is our first line of defense against hunger. SNAP fuels our economy: for every \$5 of SNAP benefits spent, \$9 of local economic activity is generated.⁷ SNAP is there during temporary times of economic need, keeping families and individuals whole by helping them buy food so that they can divert limited incomes towards other necessities like housing, health care, or child care.

SNAP has been closely scrutinized, the subject of a top to bottom review by the House Agriculture Committee last year, and the upcoming effort to write a new Farm Bill will continue to generate discussion about ideas for improvement and reform. We agree that there’s room for improvement to the SNAP program—improvements that strengthen and restore the program and its ability to help low-income people purchase nutritious food.

First and foremost, SNAP’s ability to adjust to the level of need for the program must be preserved. We oppose efforts to block grant SNAP: a block grant will not increase local control or flexibility to administer this important program, but rather, it will tie the hands of state actors and increase red tape. A block grant will cap funding, making it more difficult for the program to expand and contract according to economic need and puts the state in jeopardy of lawsuits when there are long waitlists for services. SNAP must remain an entitlement program

with uniform federal standards to ensure that all eligible people everywhere have the same access to benefits.

SNAP could be improved to increase the purchasing power of SNAP recipients to buy healthier, more nutritious food. Currently, SNAP allotments are based off of USDA’s Thrifty Food Plan (TFP), the lowest cost food plan put together by USDA to meet a household’s basic nutritional needs at minimum cost; however, the TFP has its origins in the 1930s and was designed for emergency use only, not to sustain a household’s normal food needs.⁸ By updating SNAP allotments to be based on the Low Cost Food Plan, SNAP benefits would increase a household’s ability to buy more nutritious and palatable food.

SNAP benefits could also be improved if we protect and create state options and waivers that increase efficiency and accuracy when determining eligibility and benefits payments. In particular, permitting the use of a standard deduction to capture high utilities costs or medical costs save administrators and applicants the time and difficulty of tracking down bills and receipts so that eligible individuals then have more accurately determined benefits to help them buy food while paying their medical and other bills.

Finally, we should ensure that adults who are able to work but are having difficulty finding and securing stable employment should not be punished by ending their SNAP benefits if they are utilizing all the resources available to them to find a job. Congress should support legislation

that adds more exemptions to the work requirement for able bodied adults without dependents (ABAWDs) if their state denies them a place in a SNAP employment and training program or if they are getting employment services from the Office of Veterans Affairs. This way, individuals who are looking but who have been having the most difficulty with finding stable employment can continue to have the food they need to help them meet their full potential.

2. *Increase access to nutritious food*

- Restore the potential and promise of the Washington State Dept. of Agriculture's (WSDA) Farm to School and Small Farms Direct Marketing programs
- Preserve our state's food safety net
- Expand healthy food incentives and nutrition education for SNAP

Having fresh, nutritious food starts with supporting our growers and their small businesses. WSDA administers the Farm to School and the Small Farms Direct Marketing programs to help Washington's farmers expand and diversify their marketing opportunities. This increases the variety of vendors and produce available at farmers markets and used in meals at schools, senior centers, and other institutions. Restoring state funding to these programs will expand the ability of WSDA to meet the goals of these programs and maximize investments in the program

from federal and private grants.

Our Legislature should also resist the urge to rollback the circle of protection provided by our food safety net. Investments in state nutrition assistance programs have helped Washington reduce our rates of food insecurity and hunger and contribute to our economy which has outpaced other states in our nation.

Other states also look to Washington and the programs we are piloting to incentivize the purchase of fruits and vegetables with SNAP, thanks to our having the largest Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive (FINI) grant from USDA. The FINI grant has enabled farmers markets across our state to offer partial or dollar-for-dollar matches of SNAP dollars used to buy fresh fruits and vegetables. It has also funded prescription vouchers to buy fruits and vegetables for SNAP recipients with targeted health needs, and Safeway stores will be offering coupon incentives later this year. FINI was an excellent product of the 2014 Farm Bill, and Congress should expand the FINI grant and other programs in the next Farm Bill to help states continue to build programs that educate and encourage SNAP recipients to buy nutritious, healthier food.

3. *Increase access to nutritious meals for children*

- Make breakfast a part of the school day just like lunch
- Ensure equal access to nutritious school meals for all students

- Strengthen programs that ensure a healthy start for infants and young children

All students need a healthy breakfast to help them settle down and focus on the business of learning. Breakfast is a proven, effective way to improve academic performance, decrease disciplinary problems, and improve health outcomes for kids.⁹ Schools can improve access to school breakfast if breakfast is served during the school day, just like lunch, instead of before the start of the day. When breakfast is available during the school day, more meals are bought and served, generating more federal reimbursements and revenue for the school district. The Legislature should work together to pass legislation that makes breakfast a part of the school day at high-need schools with low breakfast participation, provide those schools with small, one-time, start-up grants to cover the costs of changing their service delivery models, and clarify existing instruction time legislation so that schools can serve breakfast in the classroom while meeting state requirements for educational activities for students.

"They say you got to have that nest egg, but I can't afford that. I'm thankful for what I have but everything I have goes out monthly. It's not a pretty picture. No savings—I mean zero."

—Derek, Seattle

CONCLUSIONS/RECOMMENDATIONS *(CONT.)*

We also must continue to ensure that every student in need, no matter where he or she lives, has equal access to a nutritious school meal. We oppose efforts to block grant the school meal programs: school meals should remain an entitlement so that schools can provide nutritious meals to every student in need and retain federal guidelines that are based on expert nutritional guidance to combat childhood obesity and meet targets for physical and mental development.

Congress should also support budget investments and expand access to the Women, Infants, and Children program to ensure that all children get the best start in life with healthy food that targets different stages of development. This includes closing the gap that is created when WIC benefits end on a child's fifth birthday, even though the child's birthdate precludes them from enrolling in kindergarten and receiving school meals.

4. *Advance abilities to learn about and apply for benefits*

- Track performance and improve mapping food insecurity data in Washington
- Raise the minimum SNAP benefit
- Break down barriers to applying for benefits online

We can improve how our state administers federal nutrition assistance programs and ensures that those most in need of this assistance learn about the programs that can help them in

times of need. Washington can improve how we track program performance and map food insecurity by supporting legislation that does two things: 1) require state agencies that administer a federal nutrition program to contribute to an annual, public report, the key data that tells us how many people are eligible and using nutrition assistance programs and the amount of federal dollars that these programs bring and could bring into our state if we met national performance benchmarks; and 2) add the two question food insecurity screening to a statewide survey to help us understand what food insecurity looks like in different counties and across communities of color.

We can also ensure that more eligible people are getting the help they need if Congress increases the minimum SNAP benefit so that seniors and people with disabilities have more incentive to go through the complicated application process, and if we break down barriers to applying for benefits online with services and subsidies for low-income people who can't afford to have internet in their homes.

5. *Reduce homelessness and increase access to safe, affordable homes*

- Extend and make permanent designated funds from document recording fees for homelessness and housing programs
- End housing discrimination based on source of income

Hunger does not exist in a vacuum, but as we have seen over and over

again from the stories of our focus group participants, hunger is the result of skipping meals in order to save income to cover less flexible needs, including housing. Yet homelessness is a growing crisis throughout our state: homelessness in Washington increased by 7.3% in 2016¹⁰ and we now have more than 32,000 students in our state who do not have a home.¹¹

Washington's network of housing and homelessness programs must have the funding they need to respond and work towards reducing the threat of homelessness. The Legislature should support renewing and expanding the designation of funds from document recording fees for these programs. If they don't act this year, over \$70 million are at risk of being lost when they are needed the most.

The Legislature should also pass legislation to prohibit discrimination by landlords based on an applicant's reported source of income. It's unconscionable that anyone should go homeless if they have a voucher or other assistance in hand to help them pay the rent and keep a roof over their head.

6. *Ensure access to affordable health care*

A single health emergency can devastate a household, generating deep medical debt that takes away income for food, housing, and other necessities. Having expanded access to health insurance by the Affordable Care Act can help stretch meager incomes,

with coverage for care that they might not otherwise be able to afford.

If Congress repeals the Affordable Care Act without a replacement, 775,000 Washingtonians are in danger of losing their health care coverage, and our uninsured rate would more than double.¹² This sweeping change would put those individuals at risk of food insecurity and hunger, should they experience an income crushing medical emergency without the insurance to help reduce their bills.

Medicaid and Medicare should be strengthened to expand coverage for dental and vision care, and elected officials should support legislation and budget investments that incentivize and increase capacity for medical professionals to take more patients who are covered by these plans.

7. Address the core causes of hunger: reduce poverty and increase economic security

- Improve and restore TANF
- End discriminatory pre-screening for jobs practices
- Support living wage jobs initiatives

Hunger is a symptom of poverty. To end hunger in Washington we must work towards ending poverty.

The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash grant helps families with children pay for necessities not covered by SNAP, such as rent, clothing, and hygiene products. The Legislature should finish the work started in 2015

and fully restore the TANF cash grant.

More families in need would access TANF and its array of work support and training programs if we made it easier for them to keep their benefits without having to sacrifice a reliable means of transportation to get them to and from work programs. The Legislature should work towards raising the car asset limit for TANF to reflect a more realistic value of a reliable car.

The Legislature should also follow the lead of Oregon and pass the Fair Chance Act which would encourage employers to meet and learn more about a qualified applicant with a prior felony conviction, thereby opening the doors to finding more stable employment for individuals who face such a huge barrier in their job search.

We also support initiatives that create living wage jobs as the increase in income will help individuals meet their basic needs while building up savings to keep them off of the precipice of poverty.

8. Clean up our tax code so that we can afford these investments

- Close outdated tax loopholes
- Expand tax credits for middle and low income households

You can't get something for nothing: if we want to see a healthier, hunger-free Washington, we must clean up our tax code so that we can afford these investments and improvements. A good start is to close outdated tax loopholes, subjecting tax credits to an extensive

review to ensure that they are helping businesses as intended while supporting job growth in our state before renewing them. We do support the expansion of tax credits that help sustain our middle and lower income classes: expanding the Earned Income Tax Credit and the Child Care Tax Credit will put money back in the pockets of families and low wage workers so that they can better cover their basic household needs.

Join Us!

Northwest Harvest is embarking on our 50th year in leading the fight for hungry people statewide to have access to nutritious food while respecting their dignity and promoting good health. We work towards a vision of ending hunger in Washington by providing nutritious food freely to a statewide network of 375 food pantries, meal programs, and high-need schools while advocating for the policies and public investments that work towards reducing hunger, poverty, and disparities. We hope you will hear our call to advocacy and join us: together, we can make Washington a healthier place for all.

"Sometimes I feel like a bad mom because I can't feed my kids, but when you walk in here [the food bank], they don't make you feel like that."

—Sheena, Port Angeles

PROCESS AND POVERTY MEASURES

Process

Focus groups were held in 2016 at five locations across Washington, representing rural, urban, and suburban areas in Adams, Clallam, Clark, King, and Walla Walla counties.

Food bank staff recruited clients representing a range of ages and life circumstances. Staff informed all participants that the group was not a requirement of receiving food. Northwest Harvest paid participants \$30 for attending the two-hour focus group and offered snacks during the session. Northwest Harvest staff members conducted the groups, following a transcript of 45 questions we ask each year. Some participants chose to remain anonymous; those whose photos and names appear here have given informed consent.

Poverty Measures

The following are definitions of terms and data included in the report:

Self-Sufficiency Standard¹⁰ Included for each community is a graph of a self-sufficiency standard for the geographic area showing what is needed for a family of four to adequately support themselves (specifically, two adults, one pre-school and one school-age child). The guidelines used come from The Self-Sufficiency Standard for Washington State, developed by Dr. Diana Pearce of the University of Washington. Dr. Pearce developed a methodology for calculating the costs of basic necessities for families of different sizes in different areas of

the state. These numbers are updated periodically, and for this report, we use the most recent numbers available. The graphs demonstrate that families above the official poverty guideline fall far short of having the resources necessary to meet their basic needs.

100% of federal poverty¹² The official measure of poverty in the U.S. was developed in 1963, based on the cost of a basic food diet for a household, multiplied by three to estimate that household's expenses. Experts believe the current poverty measure is flawed because of changes in family expenses over the past four decades, with the costs of housing, health care and childcare taking a significantly larger share of a household budget.

In 2010, the U.S. Census Bureau released the **Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM)**¹⁸ This measure takes into consideration the costs of food, housing, utilities and clothing. It also takes into consideration governmental non-cash benefits, such as food stamps, and is adjusted according to regional differences in cost of living. Under the SPM, 45.7 million Americans were poor in 2015, or 2.2 million more people than under the official definition of poverty.

The Supplemental Poverty Measure does not replace the official poverty measure, which is still used to determine eligibility for benefits like Medicaid, Medicare, and the federal food stamp program called SNAP, but we call your attention to it here because it is also a measure that shows the significant role

that safety net programs can play for low-income households. For instance, according to the SPM, last year, SNAP lifted nearly 4.6 million people above the poverty line, a measure not reflected in the federal poverty measure.¹⁹ Since the supplemental measure has not been adopted as the official federal measure of poverty, we continue to use the federal poverty thresholds and compare it to the Self Sufficiency Standard to portray poverty in the counties that were visited for this year's focus group report.

Minimum Wage¹¹ Included in our data section for each county is a measure showing earnings for two adults working full-time at minimum wage. Since Washington has one of the highest state minimum wage in the nation at \$9.47 per hour for 2016, some may think that level of pay would be adequate to sustain a household. The graph shows that even with two people working full-time at minimum wage of \$9.47 in 2016, they fell short of meeting self-sufficiency standard in that county.

ANNOTATED REFERENCES



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²USDA, Economic Research Services Household Food Security in the United States 2015: <https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/err215/err-215.pdf>

³<http://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

⁴<https://factfinder.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?src=CF>

⁵Unemployment Information: United States Dept of Labor; Bureau of Labor Statistics <http://data.bls.gov/map/MapToolServlet>

⁶https://www.ssa.gov/policy/docs/statcomps/oasdi_sc/2015/wa.html

⁷<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/supplemental-nutrition-assistance-program-snap/economic-linkages/>

⁸WIC: <http://www.doh.wa.gov/DataandStatisticalReports/HealthBehaviors/WIC.aspx>

^{9a, b}ESA Briefing Book, June 2016: <http://www.dshs.wa.gov/esa/manuals/briefing-book>

¹⁰The Self-Sufficiency Standard: http://depts.washington.edu/selfsuff/drupal/sites/default/files/selfsuff/docs/WA2014_SSS_Aug2015Rev.pdf

¹¹<http://www.seattletimes.com/seattle-news/politics/mayor-county-exec-declare-state-of-emergency-over-homelessness/>

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¹⁵Washington Appleseed, The Future of School Breakfast: http://media.wix.com/ugd/4569ed_678930a763b1481e81b52f52de71a83d.pdf

¹⁶SUS Dept. Housing and Urban Development, 2016 Annual Homelessness Assessment to

Congress: <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/2016-AHAR-Part-1.pdf>

¹⁷Columbia Legal Services: <http://columbialegal.org/student-homelessness-WA>

¹⁸Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, <http://www.cbpp.org/sites/default/files/atoms/files/12-7-16health-factsheets-wa.pdf>

"You don't need to cut anything. Help everybody on everything instead of worrying about stuff that's unimportant. They need to get together to fix this, this, and this. You got Democrats; you got Republicans, and if they can't get together, who pays for it? We do."

—Kevon, Battle Ground



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