



## PROVIDING FOOD AND CASH TO FIGHT HUNGER & POVERTY (HB 1151)

### Key benefits:

**Helps Washington families regain stability** through the wake of the economic downturn caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and future emergencies.

**Prevents food insecurity** by mitigating the “cliff effect” that occurs when a family no longer qualifies for assistance.

**Expands financial assistance tools during emergencies** to help Washingtonians who are not eligible for other supports to meet their basic needs.

**Responds to the recommendations from members of the Governor’s Poverty Reduction Workgroup** – people who have lived with poverty are experts in what works – and what doesn’t – in the programs designed to provide economic stability and opportunity.

**Last updated in 1991, it modernizes the standards for cash assistance** programs so the real costs of what households actually need to meet their basic needs is built into our programs.

### What does the bill do?

**Transitional Food Assistance** helps prevent food insecurity and mitigates the “cliff effect” that occurs when a family no longer qualifies for assistance – either because they exceed the income limit or are no longer eligible. Currently only families leaving TANF are eligible - HB 1151 would extend eligibility for Transitional Assistance to households with children leaving food stamps – a modest one-time cash benefit and 5 months of transitional food assistance (SNAP/FAP) provides an ‘off ramp’ rather than a cliff when a family’s circumstances change. Start date: July 1, 2022

**Disaster Cash Assistance Program** provides a one-time cash benefit within a 12-month period during a declared emergency - yet COVID has shown that some emergencies last a very long time, leaving vulnerable people without income to make ends meet. HB 1151 allows households to get help more than once in a 12-month period during a Governor-declared emergency.

Washington requires that the **“standard of need” for cash assistance programs** is updated annually to set benefit levels for programs like TANF. The need standard estimates the costs of common household goods and services, but this standard was created in 1991 – and it doesn’t include basics like child care or utilities. **HB 1151 modernizes** this outdated standard to reflect the real costs of meeting basic needs in Washington.

### Why is this bill important now?

**HB 1151** helps Washington families regain stability in wake of the economic upheaval caused by COVID-19. It responds to poverty-reduction recommendations of both the Legislative-Executive WorkFirst Poverty Reduction Oversight Task Force and the Governor’s Poverty Reduction Workgroup, comprised of Washingtonians with lived experience of poverty. It advances policies that: a) provide cash assistance during emergencies; b) provide a smooth off-ramp from assistance programs to help mitigate the “cliff effect” that occurs when a family no longer qualifies for assistance; and c) ensuring programs respond to the realities of poverty and reflect the real costs of what it takes to make ends meet in our state.

### How much will this cost?

Estimated to be \$989,000 in the 2021-23 biennium, which includes one-time automation costs. Most of the food assistance costs would be paid through federal SNAP funds.