



MEDIA ADVISORY

MEDIA CONTACT: Jordan Rubin
EMAIL: jordanr@northwestharvest.org
TELEPHONE: 206.923.7426
TWITTER: @nwharvest
FACEBOOK: Facebook.com/NWHarvest
WEB: northwestharvest.org

NORTHWEST HARVEST CALLS FOR IMMEDIATE END TO GOVERNMENT SHUTDOWN

Official Statement from Washington's Leading Hunger Relief Agency

(Seattle, WA – January 16, 2019) Northwest Harvest, Washington's statewide independent hunger relief and food justice agency, calls for an immediate end to the partial government shutdown that continues to paralyze our country and put its citizens at risk.

Many of us who call Washington home live paycheck to paycheck, and sudden changes in circumstance impact families deeply. Given that 40% of Americans don't have \$400 in savings¹, even one missed paycheck can have a devastating long-term effect on a home budget. As the current Federal Government shutdown continues furloughing federal employees or requiring them to work without pay, hunger is growing in our communities as food becomes an early casualty of constrained household budgets.

Not only is this shutdown putting a great deal of financial strain on federal employees, contractors, and their families—it's also disrupting basic access and distribution of healthy foods into our communities. Stalled financing of local farms by the Department of Agriculture puts struggling growers at risk of losing their homes or their land. This is another blow, as grower business relationships have suffered setbacks from ongoing trade disputes. Furthermore, this shutdown jeopardizes routine food safety inspections conducted by the Food and Drug Administration, adding increased threats to the health and safety of Washington residents of all income brackets who are adversely affected when our country's safeguards are not allowed to do their jobs.

USDA and Washington state have announced continued funding for SNAP and WIC for the next month—vital food and nutrition support programs that help struggling families put food on their tables. But the health damaging effects of the stress of living in poverty are exacerbated with the day to day uncertainty of what will happen if this shutdown continues without the promise of continued assistance. Families are already stretched to near breaking points.

"As an agency that specializes in making nutritious food available in times of sudden or unexpected need across the state, we have seen a substantial increase in the number of families visiting their community food banks for the very first time," said Thomas Reynolds, CEO of Northwest Harvest. "Many of these first-time visitors are families of federal employees. This is not right."

Northwest Harvest thanks our House members, including Rep. Suzan DelBene, Rep. Rick Larsen, Rep. Jamie Herrera Beutler, Rep. Derek Kilmer, Rep. Pramila Jayapal, Rep. Kim Schrier, Rep. Adam Smith, and Rep. Denny Heck for supporting legislation to reopen our government. We urge our entire state congressional delegation and Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell to demand an immediate end to the shutdown and pass legislation to reopen our government to protect its citizens from threats to health and safety posed by the real threats of hunger and poverty.

¹ <https://www.federalreserve.gov/newsevents/pressreleases/other20180522a.htm>

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About Northwest Harvest

Northwest Harvest is Washington's leading hunger relief agency – supporting a statewide network of 375 food banks, meal programs, and high-need schools. Focused on improving equity in our food system, Northwest Harvest believes everyone in Washington should have consistent access to nutritious food that feeds the body, mind, and spirit. In addition to making sure those who suffer from hunger have increased access to healthy food, Northwest Harvest aims to shift public opinion, as well as impact institutional policies and societal practices that perpetuate hunger, poverty, and disparities in our state.