



2021 Legislative Agenda

Anti-Hunger Priorities:

Support Food Banks (\$23.1 million)

Expand funding for **Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP)**, which is our state's core support for local food banks who have had record increases (30% - 300%) in demand for services. Through WSDA, EFAP provides flexible funds for local food bank coalitions to address local community needs – from food purchasing to distribution to storage.

Continue WSDA's **Farm to Food Pantry Grants**, which enable food pantries to buy directly from local producers to feed hungry people, largely in rural communities. Funds can be targeted to prioritize farmers of color, who are less likely to have access to COVID relief for agriculture, and tribal food programs, who have been hard hit economic disruptions.

Create **COVID Response Food Bank Grants** through WSDA to provide flexible, responsive funds for food banks to respond to emerging opportunities and targeted community needs, especially in communities of color and tribal communities, to address ongoing hardship and supply chain issues over the biennium. In 2020, similar funds supported projects such as: connecting food banks with an airline meal company to provide meals for home delivery; or, connecting a school district kitchen, a food bank, and local growers to purchase food to make and freeze scratch-cooked meals for delivery.

Strengthen SNAP

Continue DOH's **SNAP Fruit and Vegetable Incentive Program** which matches funds by SNAP shoppers to purchase produce. This responds to the steep increase in SNAP clients, as well as preserves the Fruit & Veg Prescription Program for low income patients at community health clinics, which is not covered by Washington's federal grant. (**\$3 million**)

Expand **Transitional Food Assistance (HB 1151)** to include households with children who receive food stamp benefits and provide a small one-time cash benefit and 5 months of additional food assistance to avoid the 'benefit cliff' for those who would lose benefits because they exceed the income level or would otherwise lose their food benefits. (**\$989,000**)

Ensure our state's **Food Assistance Program** for legally residing immigrants is funded adequately to meet its requirement to mirror the federal food stamp program by increasing benefit levels for certain months in 2021. (**\$6.7 million**)

Improve Meals for Kids (\$4.4 million)

Create **Farm to School to Families grants** through OSPI and WSDA to enable school nutrition programs to buy from local farmers to improve the nutritional quality and appeal of school meals, and to distribute meals to families in more accessible, family-friendly ways.

Anti-Poverty Priorities:

Expand funding at SBCTC for **Basic Food Education & Training program** to place navigators at each of our state's community and technical colleges to connect low income students with SNAP (Basic Food) and to support services to meet education and basic needs (tuition, fees, books/tools, housing, child care, transportation, etc.) – see 2019's [HB 1893](#). Navigators ensure students are able to complete their job training and education successfully, and BFET investments draw down federal match funds dedicated to direct support services for students. **(\$88,000 per CTC = \$6 million/biennium; federal reimbursement of \$2.992 million/biennium)**

Strengthen TANF by permanently extending COVID policies that allow more families to become - and stay - eligible for TANF by rolling back rigid sanction policies, and restoring time limit extensions for families that are complying with program requirements but still facing hardship.

Invest in housing and homelessness services with \$250 million for permanent affordable housing through the Housing Trust Fund and increase document recording fees to fund ongoing homelessness prevention and wrap-around services.

Prevent homelessness by protecting tenants: Provide rent assistance and adapt eviction policies to prevent evictions due to COVID-related non-payment of rent or without just cause.

Modernize the 'standard of need' for cash assistance programs ([HB 1151](#)) to more accurately define poverty and set cash assistance support levels. The new standard is based on studies of actual living costs and accounts for inflation; includes costs of shelter, fuel, food, transportation, clothing, household and personal maintenance, and necessary incidentals. *(DSSH request legislation)*

Our Ongoing Commitments:

Sustainable Revenue for a Healthy, Hunger-free Washington

Create a more **fair and balanced state tax system** by closing outdated tax loopholes, increasing transparency in tax breaks, and finding new and sustainable sources of revenue to ensure services are available to help people out of poverty and to invest in the foundations of a healthy, prosperous and hunger-free Washington.

Protect Investments in Nutrition, Health & Economic Stability for People in Need

Our state has created innovative programs and proactive policies that help fight hunger and poverty in our communities. Our Coalition is committed to **protect and strengthen basic needs, anti-hunger, and anti-poverty programs for low-income people** so these programs continue to fight hunger and build stable pathways out of poverty.