

March 13, 2025

TO: Chair Ormsby, Vice Chairs Gregerson and Macri, and Ranking Member Couture
Chair Robinson, Vice Chair Stanford, and Ranking Member Gildon
Speaker Jenkins and Majority Leader Pedersen

Hunger and food insecurity rates have risen sharply in Washington, now affecting nearly 10% of all households. Washington's hunger safety net programs provide targeted support to people most in need of help putting food on their tables. Food prices and financial uncertainty continue to rise, creating household stress as well as increasing pressures on the array of programs that serve hungry people. We, the undersigned organizations, urge the Legislature to fully fund key hunger safety net services so community organizations can continue to meet current levels of demand.

[According to recent data from University of Washington's WAFOOD survey project](#), the top three food assistance programs lower income households rely on are school meals, food banks, and SNAP (Basic Food). Over the past year, **visits to food banks and pantries surged by 26%, reaching a staggering 13.4 million visits** (compared to 8.2 million, the average annual visits 2014 – 2022). In SFY 2024, nearly 920,500 Washingtonians were enrolled in SNAP each month. Yet the **average household SNAP benefit was \$322/month** – only \$3.57 per meal. Functioning like SNAP for families of low income students, **SUN Bucks drew down \$71.5 million in federal food benefits** last summer. Finally, nationwide, **food insecurity among seniors increased 20% over the past two years, and in Washington, the portion of seniors living in poverty has spiked to 1 in 10 seniors** – the highest level in a decade.

Hunger relief programs – from food banks to hot meals at senior centers - are struggling to keep up with unprecedented demand. The funding levels from before the pandemic are no longer sufficient to meet today's needs. Given these challenges, even with a state budget deficit, it is crucial to prioritize funding for food security, much like with K-12 education and public safety.

Our shared budget priorities sustain the services people are turning to now – they are not a result of new programs or policy expansions. The funding levels requested by advocates reflect the funding requested by the state agencies and closely mirror the funding levels in Gov. Inslee's Book Two budget, *so programs can maintain current service levels without cutting back on food or clients*:

- **Extend Funding for Food Banks and Food Pantries (WSDA) - \$93.25 million**
- **Maintain Service Levels for Senior Nutrition Programs (DSHS-ALTSA) - \$35.4 million**
- **Maintain Funding for SNAP Fruit & Vegetable Incentive Programs (DOH) - \$6 million**
- **Protect SUN Bucks/ Summer EBT (DSHS-ESA) - \$11.83 million**

The 179 undersigned organizations from across our state urge the Legislature to take a bold approach to addressing our state's deficit with a budget that prioritizes adequate funding for hunger relief – as well as housing, health care, and other safety net programs. Simultaneously, we urge you to implement progressive revenue options that safeguard these essential programs now and provide much-needed sustainability and stability for our state budget into the future.

Signed,

Results for WAFOOD5, the fifth iteration of the survey, were [released last month](#). This project is led by UW and WSU, supported in part by WSDA:

- **Among largely low income respondents to the recent survey (Aug-Oct 2024), 33% reported low food security and additional 22% had very low food security – 55% of all respondents, double the rate in Jan. 2021 (27%).**
- **Food insecurity was higher among households with children; larger households; lower income households; and households with Black, American Indian/Alaskan Native and multi-racial respondents.**
- **70% of food insecure respondents reported reducing their food quantity and quality due to high costs.**

ACT - A Common Thread
Agape Service Project / Agape Food Bank
Aging & Long Term Care of Eastern Washington
ALA Garifuina Women
Alimentando al Pueblo
Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition
APOYO
Arlington Community Food Bank
Arlington Farmers Market
Aurora Commons
Bainbridge Island School District
Ballard Food Bank
Bellingham Farmers Market Association
Bellingham Food Bank
Black Lives Matter Seattle-King County
Bounty Food Bank
Bread of Life Food Bank
Byrd Barr Place
Capital Recovery Center
Cascade Milling
Cascadia Produce
Cashmere Food Bank
Catholic Charities Eastern Washington
Chief Seattle Club
Colton Uniontown Food Pantry
Colvin Ranch
Community House Mental Health Agency
Community Justice Alliance
Community Resource Network Catholic Housing Services of Western WA
Community Services of Moses Lake
Concern for Neighbors Food Bank
The Council on Aging & Human Services
Cultivate South Park
Des Moines Area Food Bank
Duvall Farmers Market
Duwamish Valley Neighborhood Preservation Coalition
Duwamish River Community Coalition
El Centro de la Raza
Emergency Food Network of Tacoma and Pierce County
Eagles Nest Community Kitchen
Eatonville Community Food Bank
Eatonville Family Agency

Edible Hope Kitchen
Edmonds Food Bank
Elizabeth Gregory Home
Endicott Ranch
Emerson Garfield Farmers Market
Everett Boys & Girls Club
Evergreen Produce Connection
Faith Action Network
FamilyWorks
Farm and Food Justice Network
Farm at FP Schools
First Baptist Church of Yelm
First Tongan Senior Association- Sound Generations
The Food Bank @ St. Mary's
Foothills Food Bank
Forks Community Food Bank
Friday Harbor Food Bank
GHP FISH Food Bank and Community Services
Gifts from the Heart Food Bank
Goldendale Farmers Market
Granite Falls Community Coalition and Food Bank
Greenwood Senior Center
Harvest Against Hunger
Highline Area Food Bank
Hoquiam Food and Clothing Bank
HumanLinks Foundation
Incubator Outreach
Issaquah Food and Clothing Bank
Jefferson County Farmers Market
Jewish Family Service
Key Peninsula Bischoff Food Bank
Kitsap Farms LLC
Kingdom Gathering Outreach
Kitsap Aging & Long-Term Care (designated AAA)
La Center Schools
Lake City Lifeline
Latino Community Fund of Washington State; Progresso: Latino Progress
Legacy Community Outreach Food Bank
Long Hearing Farm
Lowee Columbia School Gardens
Lutheran Community Services NW
Lynnwood Food Bank

Making A Difference Foundation/Eloise's Cooking Pot Food Bank

Marysville Community Food Bank

Mercer Island Farmers Market

Mercy Housing Northwest

MD for Food Security

The Moore Wright Group

Mukilteo Foodbank

Multicultural Child Family Hope Center

Multi Service Center

New Beginnings Christian Fellowship

New Jerusalem Food Pantry

North Helpline

North Kitsap Fishline

Northwest Agriculture Business Center

Northwest Harvest

North Whidbey Help (aka Help House)

Norseman RV

Nourish Pierce County

Nutrition First

Ocean Shores Food Bank

One Life Food Pantry

Orcas Island Food Bank

Orting Food Bank

OSL Serves

Othello Food Bank

Pacific Islander Community Assoc. of WA

Paradise of Praise Foodbank

Parkway Community Services

PICAWA-Pacific Islander Community Association

Pike Market Senior Center & Food Bank

Plateau Outreach Ministries

Point Roberts Food Bank

Port Angeles Food Bank

Poulsbo Farmers Market

Prison Scholar Fund

PV Gardens LLC

Rainier Valley Food Bank

Rosehips and Thrifty Finds Restoration

Rural Resources Community Action

Sammamish Valley Alliance

Samoan Family Support Services

Seattle-King County Area Agency on Aging

Seattle-King County Advisory Council for Aging and Disability Services
Sequim Food Bank
Shoreline Farmers Market
Snohomish Community Food Bank
Snohomish Farmers Market
South King County Food Coalition
Stilly Valley Chamber Arlington Farmers Market
St. James Cathedral
St Leo's Food Connection
Sunrise Outreach Center of Yakima
Seattle Neighborhood Farmers Markets
Skagit/Island Head Start
Skykomish Food Bank
Snoqualmie Valley Food Bank
South Park Senior Citizens
Spokane Farmers Market
St James Cathedral Kitchen
Stilly Valley Center
The Storehouse
South Beach Christian Outreach
Teen Feed
Tenino Community Service Center
Third Place Commons
Thursday Market in Perry (Spokane)
Thurston County Food Bank
Tillicum Woodbrook Community Center and Foodbank
TriCities Food Bank
Trinity Food Pantry
Triumph Teen Life Center
United Way of King County
University District Food Bank
Upper Valley MEND
Urban Impact Seattle
Vancouver Farmers Market
Vashon Island Grower's Association
Vashon Maury Community Food Bank
Vedic Cultural Center
Visitation Ministries of the Poor - PSJ 23 Parish
Villa Comunitaria
Viva Farms
Volunteers of America Western Washington
Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging (W4A)

Washington Farm to School Network
Washington State Farmers Market Association
Washington Food Coalition
The Wave Foundation
West Seattle Food Bank
White Center Food Bank
White Pass Community Food Bank
Whitman County Food Coalition
Women & Children's Free Restaurant & Community Kitchen
YWCA Food Bank
YWCA | Seattle King Snohomish