



2025 Legislative Agenda

Anti-Hunger Priorities:

Free School Meals for All Kids ([SB 5352](#) / [HB 1404](#))

Washington has made big progress on expanding free school meals, yet 1 in 3 students still don't have access. Nutritious school breakfasts and lunches fuel student learning and healthy development. Yet cost, paperwork, and stigma are barriers for student participation – and the income eligibility for subsidized meals is too low. We know that when schools serve free meals to *all* students, child hunger rates improve; stigma is eliminated; staff can focus on preparing meals; meal service is streamlined; and family budgets stabilize. If they need it, *every* student should have access to free school meals, regardless of what grade they're in, where their school is, or their family situation.

Extend Funding for Food Banks and Food Pantries Across our State

Food insecurity has spiked in the past two years, affecting nearly 1 in 10 households statewide. Prices remain stubbornly high for essentials, especially food, creating unprecedented challenges for hungry people – and the food banks that serve them. In the last year, there were nearly *13.4 million client visits* to local food banks (up from 7.8 million in 2019), yet food donations are down. Extraordinary help is needed to respond to the crisis facing a crisis for our food banks.

Invest \$93 million in WSDA's Food Assistance Programs that support food banks in every community.

Fully Fund Senior Nutrition Programs to Promote Health and Stability

Our senior population is growing – but too many are struggling to meet basic needs. Nationwide, senior hunger rose 20% from 2021 to 2024, and nearly 1 in 10 Washington seniors lives in poverty now - the highest rate in at least a decade. For years, Washington has underinvested in the nutrition safety net for seniors and people with disabilities – yet these nutrition programs are key to keeping people healthy, safe in their homes, socially connected, and able to access other supportive services to maintain health.

Invest \$35.4 million to fund current caseload of DSHS nutrition programs that serve low income elders.

Maintain Current Funding Levels for SNAP Fruit & Vegetable Incentive Programs

Washington has built a successful statewide network of partners for this program: farmers markets, Safeway, independent grocers and community health clinics help SNAP shoppers and food insecure patients afford to buy healthy produce and stretch their food budgets. These programs are more needed than ever - food insecurity has spiked and SNAP isn't adequate to afford a healthy diet. Additional funds are needed to maintain current caseload *and* to ensure DOH has enough non-federal funds as match to apply for another round of federal grants to support this highly successful program.

Invest \$6 million to fight hunger and help low income people afford more healthy, fresh produce.

Continue funding for SUN Bucks to Fight Summer Child Hunger

With a rise in food insecurity and poverty, we need every tool available to help hungry kids and their families. The new federal summer EBT program, now called SUN Bucks, provides funds over the summer for low income students' families to buy groceries. It was wildly successful in its first summer: almost 600,000 students' families received nearly \$71 million in federal food assistance.

Provide \$11.83 million to DSHS to manage SUN Bucks in partnership with OSPI

Anti-Poverty Priorities:

Promote food security with housing security ([HB 1217](#) / [SB 5222](#))

Food security is tied to housing security, but Washington's laws don't protect tenants from excessive rent increases, predatory fees, or inadequate notice about rent hikes. Excessive rent increases are increasing evictions and homelessness, especially for seniors and people of color. To support housing security, tenants need greater protections and more time to be able to make plans when rents do go up.

Prevent Cuts to Homelessness Services

To prevent any reduction in current services for homelessness, the budget must backfill the ongoing shortfall in funding caused by a lag in document recording revenue which funds these services in every county. These services include: shelter, emergency housing supports, youth and young adult services, and more. Our housing crisis needs all available options to prevent *and* end homelessness.

Invest \$253 million in the operating budget for homelessness services

Expand access to the Working Families Tax Credit ([HB 1214](#))

Every low income person deserves a boost from this life-changing tax credit, including young adults and seniors. The successful roll out of this program shows that it makes a difference for struggling people, but income-eligible 18-24 year olds who are working or attending college are ineligible, as are seniors over age 64. Removing this age restriction helps low income young people start adulthood with more economic stability and more opportunities for lifelong success and helps all seniors in poverty.

Ensure TANF is there for families in deep poverty when they need it ([HB 1463](#))

Providing cash assistance is the most effective way to help people living in deep poverty but Washington's TANF program needs permanent fixes to help families find a path out of poverty. Provide flexibility for TANF time limit extensions for very low income families with children who face hardship, are meeting all program requirements, and who need time to stabilize their families.

TANF benefits should not keep families in deep poverty

TANF cash assistance is for families with children with incomes less than \$15,696/year (\$1,308/month) – but the cash benefit for these families keeps them far below the poverty line – for a family of 5 whose only income is TANF puts them at 31% of the federal poverty level. Aligning TANF benefits to 16% of the Standard of Need provides more support to families and ensure benefits keep pace with costs.

Our Ongoing Commitment:

Sustainable Revenue for a Healthy, Hunger-free Washington

Create a more fair and balanced state tax system by finding new and sustainable sources of revenue, closing outdated tax loopholes, and increasing transparency in tax breaks 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.

HB 1319 (Street) – wealth tax