



2024 Legislative Agenda

Anti-Hunger Priorities:

Free School Meals for All Kids ([HB 2058](#) / [SB 5964](#))

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 for struggling families. The pandemic waivers made it clear: 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, parents' stress decreases. If they need it, *every* student – regardless of what grade they're in, where their school is, or what their family situation is – should have access to free school breakfast and lunch.

Summer EBT is a New Tool to Fight Child Hunger in the Summertime

With a rise in food insecurity and poverty in the past year, especially among families with children, Washington needs to use every tool available to help hungry kids and their families. Congress recently created Summer EBT, a successor to the effective and popular Pandemic EBT, which provides summertime food assistance for low income students. Investing to get our state's program running for summer 2024 would draw down as much as \$60.8 million to help 506,000 low income students' families afford more groceries when schools are closed.

Provide \$9.6 million to DSHS to launch Summer EBT in 2024.

Extend EFAP Funding for Food Banks and Food Pantries Across our State

Prices remain stubbornly high for essentials, like food and gas, and ongoing problems in the food supply chain persist, creating unprecedented challenges for hungry people – and the food banks that serve them. In 2023, new client visits to food banks increased 36%; clients visiting a food bank more than once increased 30%; and all client visits increased 31%. Local food banks still need help in this time of historic demand to ensure our neighbors don't go hungry.

Invest a one-time allocation of \$15 million in WSDA's Emergency Food Assistance Program.

Invest in Senior Nutrition Programs to Promote Health and Stability

Our senior population is growing – but too many are struggling to meet basic needs. The portion of seniors living in poverty has risen dramatically in the past few years, as has the portion who are food insecure. 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 help maintain health and stability.

Invest \$15.2 million per year at DSHS to help low income seniors and people with disabilities access nutrition programs via local Area Agencies on Aging

Finish the Job: Fully Fund Basic Needs Navigators at Colleges

Last year HB 1559: *Post-Secondary Basic Needs Act* passed, which provides basic need navigators at .75 FTE on each public college campus to support students' path to college success with critical services like SNAP, Basic Food Education & Training services, emergency assistance and more. Yet the final budget provided funding for only .5 FTE navigators and none of the needed administrative support for SBCTC.

Fully fund navigators to help students with basic needs supports during college (\$1.8 million)

Anti-Poverty Priorities:

Promote food security with housing security & rent stability ([HB 2114](#) / [SB 5961](#))

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.

Make sure TANF is there for families living in deep poverty ([HB 2007](#))

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 on TANF time limits for very low income families with children who face hardship, are meeting all program requirements, and who need time to stabilize their families.

Ensure Families on TANF Keep their Child Support Payments ([HB 1652](#))

When low income families fall on tough times, parents and children need help – right now, receiving help through TANF means our state keeps 50% of that family's child support payments to pay for TANF services. Parents in deep poverty should be able to keep 100% of child support in their own family.

Expand Access to the Working Families Tax Credit ([HB 1075](#) / [SB 5249](#))

Everyone deserves a boost from this life-changing tax credit, from young adults getting a college education to elders working long hours to make rent. This bill removes arbitrary age restrictions for people without qualifying children, allowing everyone 18 and older to apply.

Create a Guaranteed Basic Income pilot ([HB 1045](#))

The Evergreen Basic Income pilot ensures very low income people have money to meet their needs in a way that provides flexibility, dignity and autonomy. GBI programs are proven to have positive impacts on poverty, hunger, mental health, housing stability, and more.

Our Ongoing Commitment:

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.

[HB 2276/ SB 6191](#): Increase real estate excise tax (REET) on properties sold over \$3 million and reduce it on all others. New REET revenue will fund Housing Trust Fund; supportive housing, including housing for people with developmental disabilities and farm workers; Apple Health and Homes Account.

[HB 1473](#): Create a tax on extreme wealth resulting from stocks, bonds and other financial intangible property over \$250 million.

[SB 5770](#): Lift the 1% cap on local property taxes.