



2020 Washington State Legislative Session Summary

Each year, Food Lifeline sets out to work with legislative champions in Olympia and Washington DC on policies to solve hunger problems, protect successful safety net programs, and secure new investments for hunger relief efforts. We are happy to report progress in all these areas during the 2020 Washington state session.

Importantly, Food Lifeline recognizes our advocates and supporters, including partners that helped make this body of work possible: Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition, Northwest Harvest, Poverty Action Network, Racial Equity Team, Washington Anti-Poverty Advocates, Faith Action Network, United Way, Opportunity for All Caucus, Washington Food Industry Association, Washington State Budget & Policy Center, Working Families Tax Credit Coalition and especially, the Washington State House of Representatives “Food Fighters” Caucus: Reps Mia Gregerson, Zack Hudgins, Mari Leavitt, Strom Peterson, Marcus Riccelli, Sharon Shumake, Monica Stonier, My-Linh Thai.

Hunger and Health

Food Insecurity Nutrition Incentive. We secured funding to continue programs at Washington State Department of Health that make it easier for SNAP and WIC households to afford more fruits and vegetables: *Complete Eats Fruits and Vegetable Coupons* that can be redeemed at Safeway grocery stores, *Farmers Market Match* (“Fresh Bucks”) offered at local farmers markets across the state, and in health settings, and *Fruit and Vegetable Vouchers* that can be given by health professionals to patients with a qualifying health condition or who are food insecure.

[Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6168](#), Operating Budget | Bipartisan vote? Yes | Total appropriation: \$1,300,000

WIC Farmers Market Nutrition Program. We secured funding to establish a minimum allocation for fresh foods for those enrolled in the Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Nutrition Program in Washington. Senate Bill 6309 will require the Department of Health to allocate a minimum of \$28 for WIC recipients during the summer months, to be used on fresh fruits and vegetables at farmers markets.

[SSB 6309](#), Sen Liz Lovelett, HB 2262, Rep Mari Leavitt | Bipartisan vote? Yes | Total appropriation: \$110,000

Hunger Prevention

State Nutrition Programs. Despite a tough budget environment, we sought to increase funding for: Emergency Food Assistance Program, State Food Assistance Program, State Family Assistance, Refugee Cash Assistance, Senior Nutrition Programs, and Senior Farmer’s Market Nutrition Program.

Current investment and benefit levels were maintained.

Community Eligibility - Hunger-Free Schools Act. The Hunger-Free Schools Act, HB 2660, ensures the availability of breakfasts and lunches for about 7,200 students provided by 15 more Washington schools—at no cost to the state. The federal government will fund school meals at no charge if a high percentage of students in a school or group of schools meet requirements to participate in the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP). HB 2660 directs the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction to examine participation plans and requires schools who should qualify for

CEP to participate.

[ESHB 2660](#), Rep Marcus Riccelli | Bipartisan vote? Yes | Total appropriation: \$110,000 for biennium

Food Systems

Farm to Food Pantry. With help from Rep Mike Steele, Rep Mike Chapman, Sen Kevin Van De Wege, and Sen Judy Warnick we secured funding to expand partnerships between local growers & food pantries participating in WSDA's Farm to Food Pantry program. This helps hunger relief organizations across the state purchase fresh produce from their local farmers, increasing access to healthier food options for low-income residents of Washington.

[Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6168](#), Operating Budget | Bipartisan vote? Yes | Total appropriation: \$100,000

Washington State Food Policy Forum. Food Lifeline helped pass a bill create this forum to engage stakeholders in agriculture, state agencies, and nonprofits to coordinate and advance food policy, programs & related issues in Washington. Among other things, the forum will promote "strengthening hunger safety net programs to ensure they are reaching low income people in need."

[SHB 6091](#), Sen Judy Warnick | Bipartisan vote? Yes | Total appropriation: \$360,000

Food Bank & Food Pantry Capacity Grants. We helped create a new \$500,000 grant fund within WSDA for food banks & pantries to update equipment or expand capacity. This allows for the purchase or repair of items like cold storage or facility equipment that will enhance the amount of nutritious food they can provide to their communities. Thanks to Rep Beth Doglio and Sen Kevin Van De Wege who successfully championed including this important grant program in the state budget. Additional thanks to Sen Derek Stanford and Sen Judy Warnick.

[Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6168](#), Operating Budget | Bipartisan vote? Yes | Total appropriation: \$500,000.

Poverty

State Housing Trust Fund. The legislature added to last years' record investment to increase support for building or maintaining affordable-housing units - \$55 million for the Housing Trust Fund. Added to last year's budget, this makes the two-year Housing Trust Fund total \$230 million. The Housing Trust Fund provides loans and grants to entities like local governments, housing authorities, nonprofit organizations and federal-recognized tribes for affordable units.

[ESHB 6248](#), Capital Budget | Bipartisan vote? Yes | Total appropriation: \$55,000,000

Working Families Tax Credit. Washington state has the most regressive tax system in the country. People with low incomes in Washington pay up to six times more in local taxes as a share of income compared to the top 1%. Food Lifeline supports balancing the tax code to promote financial stability for working people. Although the Working Families Tax Credit was enacted by the legislature in 2008, it has never been funded. This session we advocated for bills that would have added people who file their taxes with an Individual Tax Identification Number (ITIN) to the underlying statute. Neither bill succeeded.

[HB 2521](#), Rep My-Linh Thai; [SB 6557](#), Sen Rebecca Saldaña | Bipartisan vote? Bills failed in committee | Total appropriation: \$0

Housing and Essential Needs. This program helps ensure that temporary disabilities don't force people onto the streets, by providing emergency rent & utility assistance and by providing access to some of life's most basic household and sanitary needs. We supported additional funding and helped secure a **\$15 million increase** to prevent

homelessness.

[Engrossed Substitute Senate Bill 6168](#), Operating Budget | Bipartisan vote? Yes | Total appropriation: \$51,650,000

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families. This assistance program is for families with children in deep poverty. It provides for things like housing and basic needs. We entered session wanting to improve access to TANF by easing harsh sanction policies, eliminating permanent disqualifications, allowing time-limit extensions, and integrating the mandatory orientation into a recipient's evaluation. This bill eliminates the 60-month cap for recipients whose families are without regular housing. The new law also requires DSHS to report data identifying the race of those whose TANF benefits were reduced or terminated in the last year due to the time limit or sanctions. This is intended to address inequities for families of color, who have been disproportionately penalized by harsh time restrictions.

[2SSB 6478](#), Sen Joe Nguyen | Bipartisan votes? No | Total appropriation: \$1,135,000

Equity & Social Justice

Washington State Equity Office. Food Lifeline is proud to part of the effort to pass HB 1783, Office of Equity, championed by Rep Mia Gregerson. The bill creates an Office of Equity within the Governor's Office that is tasked with helping state agencies identify practices that perpetuate systemic inequities, recommending best practices and providing implementation and training assistance.

[E2SHB 1783](#), Rep Mia Gregerson; [SB 5776](#), Sen Manka Dhingra | Bipartisan vote? No | Total appropriation: \$1,289,262 (Note: Facing the fiscal threat posed by the COVID-19 outbreak, Gov. Jay Inslee used his line-item veto on Sections 6 and 7 of Engrossed Second Substitute House Bill No. 1783)

Tax, Budget, and Nonprofits

Capital Gains Tax. Food Lifeline advocated for measures to rebalance Washington's regressive tax code while providing more revenue for community investments. The issue was not taken up by the legislature.

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Estimated Hunger & Poverty Related Appropriations: \$220,530,000

For more information:

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Note: This report will be updated and corrected as new information becomes available. Information is dated: 6/16/2020.
"Bipartisan vote" is not an exact measure but intended to capture the trend in voting.