

## **AHNC Priorities and other anti-hunger and anti-poverty provisions in Governor Inslee's proposed 2021-23 Budget:**

### **Food Assistance:**

#### **Food Banks \***

Expands the capacity of the state's **Emergency Food Assistance Program** that supports over 500 hunger relief organizations working to reduce food insecurity for approximately 2.2 million children and adults during the COVID-19 pandemic. (\$23.1 million)

#### **Farm to School grants \***

The COVID-19 pandemic has limited the types and quality of food that can be served to students. Funding is provided to WSDA to offer grants to schools to purchase local foods for distribution at schools, food service institutions, child care facilities, and other school settings. This provides more nutritious food to students while also supporting local farmers. (\$5 million)

#### **SNAP fruit and vegetable incentive programs \***

Funding is provided to support DOH's Fruit and Vegetable Incentive Program which provides low-income families with vouchers to purchase fresh produce at grocery stores and farmers markets. This provides more nutritious food for families while supporting local food producers. (\$3 million)

#### **Expand transitional food assistance to SNAP households ^**

Fund the creation and implementation of a state-funded cash benefit and transitional food assistance program for households with children who receive food stamp benefits but don't receive benefits from TANF. Starting July 1, 2022, the program will offer a one-time cash benefit to eligible households who are terminated from SNAP or FAP because they exceed the income threshold or choose to voluntarily close their food benefits. The program will also provide a transitional food benefit for 5 months. These benefits help families avoid a "benefit cliff" and support them with employment-related expenses and food security while they adjust to their new income source. (\$989,000)

#### **Issue the maximum benefit to Food Assistance Program recipients ^**

Fund maximum food benefits to people who qualify for the state's Food Assistance Program during certain months in fiscal year 2021. This will increase the number of people who have food security during the COVID-19 pandemic – and ensure Washington's state-funded food stamp program mirrors the federal program. The state must receive a waiver from USDA to offer the maximum food benefit. (Fiscal year 2021: \$6.7 million)

#### **Extend eligibility reviews for cash and food assistance ^**

Temporarily pause food and cash benefit reviews from November 2020 to June 2021 for certain safety net programs. These include food stamp programs, TANF, State Family Assistance Program, and the Aged, Blind or Disabled (ABD) Program. This gives DSHS more time to smooth

out the spike in the certificate review workload and ensure that eligible households maintain benefit access during the COVID-19 pandemic. (Fiscal year 2021: \$2.2 million state/ \$2.5 million federal; fiscal year 2022: \$672,000 state/\$863,000 federal)

## **TANF and other Cash Assistance:**

### **Extend the 60-month TANF time limit \***

Restore TANF's 60-month time limit criteria to pre- 2011 policy, so families can stay on TANF if they meet all other requirements but still are experiencing hardship. This helps more families access cash benefits when they most need them, regardless of how long they have received TANF. This extends an existing, temporary policy change from the COVID-19 pandemic. (\$2.1 million state/ \$22.8 million federal)

### **Revise TANF sanction policies \***

Fund the revised process for sanctioning and terminating households on the TANF program due to WorkFirst program requirements. The revised process creates greater access to financial assistance for families experiencing poverty. (\$1.3 million state/ \$2.9 million federal)

### **Continue Disaster Cash Assistance**

Fund the Disaster Cash Assistance Program in fiscal year 2021 to continue helping families or individuals without children during the COVID-19 crisis (assumes the governor extends proclamation 20-63). The Disaster Cash Assistance Program provides a cash benefit to those who face an emergency but don't have the financial resources to meet their basic needs. During a governor-declared disaster, they can access the program once in a twelve-month period. (Fiscal year 2021: \$9 million GF-S)

### **Continue the Washington Immigrant Relief Fund**

Fund the Washington Immigrant Relief Fund in fiscal year 2021 to assist undocumented immigrants. The program provides a one-time cash benefit to immigrants impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic who were not eligible to receive federal stimulus funds or unemployment insurance because of their immigration status. (Fiscal year 2021: \$10 million GF-S)

### **Income and Assistance Studies**

Feasibility study of safety net program expansion for undocumented Washingtonians (\$77,000)  
Feasibility study of implementing a Universal Basic Income pilot project (\$77,000)

## **Housing:**

### **Rent Assistance \***

When the eviction moratorium is lifted, renters will still owe unpaid rent, and experts predict mass evictions of low-income households if more assistance is not provided. The governor's 2021 supplemental budget proposes spending \$164 million for rental assistance between January - June of 2021. This funding will extend this rent assistance program through the 2021-

23 biennium, and will gradually wind down until the program plateaus at \$12 million annually in June 2022. (\$164 million for 2021-23 biennium; \$328 million total)

### **Housing Trust Fund \***

Capital budget includes \$220 million to build almost 3,400 affordable housing units to serve a broad spectrum of vulnerable populations, including people with chronic mental illness who need supportive housing and case management services, homeless families, youth, individual adults, and other targeted populations including veterans, farmworkers, seniors, and people with special needs.

### **Local Food Systems:**

#### **Food Policy Forum \***

Funding will support staffing and facilitation of the Food Policy Forum, which was created by SB 6091 to improve the state's food system. (\$340,000)

#### **Food supply chain resiliency**

WSDA funds to support food infrastructure and market access grants for farms, food processors and food distributors to pivot to new markets and business models. Many food supply businesses needed to adapt to new business models during the pandemic. (\$9.6 million)

### **Other investments that build on policies previously supported by AHNC:**

#### **Support for Poverty Reduction Workgroup Steering Committee**

In 2017, Gov. Inslee created (via Directive 17-13), an interagency Poverty Reduction Workgroup to develop a [strategic plan to reduce poverty](#), improve communities and make needed progress related to housing, health, employment and education. This workgroup consists of 10 local and state agencies and is co-led by DSHS, Dept of Commerce, and Employment Security. A steering committee of individuals experiencing poverty provide the valuable voice of lived experience to the workgroup. This extends funding to staff the steering committee and reimbursement to participants for costs of participating, including travel and childcare. (\$200,000)

#### **Economic Inclusion Grants**

Poverty Reduction Workgroup grants to local communities to promote equity, economic inclusion, and a stable financial foundation for people experiencing poverty, with a particular focus on people of color and people in rural counties. Two large and one small community will receive pilot grants; eligible projects may include those from communities that have collaboratively identified a gap in their poverty reduction efforts, have identified a plan and cost to address the gap, and would benefit from a state investment for a solution that is customized and sensitive to those most affected by poverty. (\$500,000)