



WASHINGTON STATE COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP

Washington's Poverty Fighting Network: 30 Community Action Agencies in all 39 counties equipping low-income individuals and families to exit poverty.

Community Action believes ending generational poverty and inequity is the right thing to do.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic and the ongoing economic downturn, Washington State legislators must summon the moral and political will to invest in healthy, just, and sustainable communities that stabilize and equip our neighbors living in poverty for recovery and long-term prosperity.

2021 STATE POLICY PRIORITIES

Protect Access to Vital Community Supports and Build Fair, Equitable, and Stable Revenue Streams.

Washington State believes advancing opportunity and economic justice requires us to consider how we collect taxes and distribute revenue to support the building blocks of healthy communities, including vital safety net programs. Washington's uniquely regressive tax code costs the poorest residents six times more of their income than the richest families and disproportionately impacts Washingtonians of Color. We support efforts to reduce the tax burden on the working poor and generate new revenue streams that reflect Washington's aspirations of fairness for all. We can balance the budget without cutting people off from support when they need it most. We can start by:

- Expanding the Working Families Tax Credit to provide direct cash assistance to Washingtonians through a Recovery Rebate.
- Rejecting regressive consumption and excise taxes as long-term solutions.
- Approving the proposed 9% capital gains tax as outlined in Governor Inslee's proposed budget.
- Maintain funding for Housing & Essential Needs and other proven investments that prevent people from losing access to basic needs like housing, food, and health care.
- Protect TANF, extend relief measures implemented during the COVID-19 pandemic, and undo harsh policies that disproportionately prevent Black and Indigenous families from accessing TANF.

Stabilize Basic Needs and Equip All Washingtonians for an Equitable COVID-19 Recovery

WSCAP stands with its coalition partners [Washington Low Income Housing Alliance](#), Anti-Hunger and Nutrition Coalition, and [Early Learning Action Alliance](#) in proposing no cuts to basic needs. We know the challenges facing Washington's low-income residents have grown during the pandemic. To weather this storm and keep these existing struggles from spiraling into a humanitarian crisis, recovery needs to target those who have been hit the hardest. In response to the crisis, we recommend starting with investments in basic needs.

Increase Stability And Creating Community Pathways Out Of Poverty.

- Invest \$240 million for the Housing Trust Fund and an additional \$10 million for the preservation of affordable housing.
- Generate shelter support by increasing the state's document recording fee for the homeless housing surcharge.
- Reduce the burden on nonprofits responding to the crisis by providing REET (Real Estate Excise Tax) exemption for acquiring property for affordable housing.
- Increase funding for foreclosure counselors and extend the Foreclosure Fairness Act to small landlords.

Help Households Experience Less Food Insecurity.

- Expand funding for Emergency Food Assistance Program (EFAP), which is our state's core support for local food banks who have had record increases (30% - 300%) in demand for services.
- Extend funding for DOH's SNAP Fruit and Vegetable Incentive Program (HB 1587), which matches funds by SNAP shoppers to purchase produce.
- Create food bank local purchasing pilots and grants to target gaps through WSDA to provide flexible, responsive funds for food banks and other food providers to respond to emerging opportunities and targeted community needs, especially in communities of color, tribal communities, and rural areas.

Make Sure Households Have Increased Education, Training Necessary To Reach Their Full Potential.

- Invest in the quality pre-K that fights poverty with a two-generation approach by restoring the 6% ECEAP vendor rate increase, the complex needs fund, and make progress on ECEAP as an entitlement for families under 185% of Federal Poverty level.
- Increase ECEAP funding to a level that will attract and retain early learning professionals in the field and build the capacity of ECEAP providers.

Provide Households With Increased Access To Healthcare That Meets Their Needs.

- Preserve the Adult Dental benefits and expand Dental Therapy.
- Continue support for Foundational Community Supports under the Medicaid Waiver.

Support Rural Washington Jobs and Housing Stability: Wx+H and HRLP is a Solid Return On Investment

Weatherization Plus Health (Wx+H): Invest in Healthy Housing, Climate Justice, and Job Creation

Weatherization addresses three critical elements of housing security: quality, safety, and affordability. Investing in Wx+H helps preserve rural housing, helps low-income homeowners age in place with lower energy costs, and fights housing-related health disparities in communities of color. We support \$55 million for low-income weatherization as outlined in the Governor's Proposed Budget.

Improvements to the Home Repair Loan Program (HRLP)

The Home Repair Loan Program (HRLP) is meant to decrease deferrals of Weatherization projects due to repair needs that are not covered by the program. HRLP helps rural homeowners improve the livability of the home and become eligible for Wx+H. HRLP provides a no-cost loan only payable upon sale or transfer of the property to cover needed repairs. However, the cap on administrative costs in addition to the unavailability of start-up funds has limited agencies' abilities to ramp up this new program. We support the \$20 million allocation outlined in Governor Inslee's proposed budget as well as legislative changes to align eligibility and program requirements with Low-Income Weatherization as the program was intended.

Washington State's 30 Community Action Agencies believe every Washington resident has the right to enjoy: safe, affordable housing; quality, compassionate health care; early, K-12 and higher education opportunities; nutritious food; anti-racist, culturally-humble providers, teachers, and systems; sufficient income for basic needs; and a resilient environment and planet that can sustain community.

Racial Equity and Social Justice: Building Equality and Belonging for All Washingtonians

Community Action's roots in the Civil Rights Movement and the War on Poverty call us to respond to the extreme impact of COVID-19 on the health and economic security of communities of color in Washington State. Equitably investing in the health, safety, and prosperity of each of our neighbors allows all of us thrive. Washington state legislators should:

Build Diverse, Equitable, Inclusive Healthy Communities.

- Support [Governor Inslee's Equity Package](#).
- Amplify BIPOC-led efforts to address bias in policing and build equitable public safety.
- Move swiftly to implement the [10-Year Plan to Reduce Poverty & Inequality in Washington State](#).
- Take bold action to carry out proposals put forth in [Governor Inslee's Climate Package](#).
- Adopt recommendations put forth by the [Environmental Justice Task Force](#).
- Keep people housed by passing statewide protections against discriminatory and arbitrary evictions and ban discrimination against renters based on a prior criminal record through the Housing Justice Act.
- End the practice of suspending driver's licenses as a punishment for an inability to pay a debt.
- Prevent insurance companies from using credit scores to calculate premium pricing.

Ensure Households Have Expanded Social Networks And Connections.

- Close the digital divide by supporting recommendations put forth by Connect Washington, which helps put educational and economic opportunities within reach for rural and under-connected communities.
- Increase opportunity for Digital Literacy that cultivates skills and job opportunities now and into the future. Support implementation of the Digital Navigator pilot program and funding for the Digital Equity Local response project that will impact community recovery and revitalization.
- Build community capacity with new digital technology and literacy skills that will build sustainable economic development opportunities for workers and businesses alike by supporting efforts like HB 2414 - Concerning Digital Equity, which establishes and sets forth requirements for the Digital Equity Capacity Grant Program and Digital Equity Competitive Grant Program.



WASHINGTON STATE COMMUNITY ACTION PARTNERSHIP

WSCAP works to build healthy communities and eliminate poverty through a unified network of Community Action Agencies across Washington State.

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