



## *A better life for all children in foster care*

All children in foster care should have the opportunity for a childhood that lays the foundation for a successful adult life. Too often, though, children of color don't get that chance—especially those from African American and Native American families. Despite the fact that there is no greater incidence of abuse in their communities, children of color are more likely to end up in the child welfare system and fare worse once they're there. The Children's Administration has a stated commitment to ending these poor results for children of color, and work in King County points towards some promising solutions. Next, we need a statewide understanding of the problem and a plan for addressing it so that all children in foster care can look forward to a bright, positive future.

We call on lawmakers to: **1)** Form a state-level commission to develop specific policy proposals aimed at eliminating the overrepresentation of African American and Native American children in the child welfare system, **2)** Support and fund overall reform of the system, with particular attention to the benchmarks for reducing the overrepresentation of children of color contained in the Braam Oversight Panel's reports.

## *Finish the job: health coverage for every child by 2010*

Every child should have health care coverage. In Washington, the Legislature and Governor have taken significant steps over the past two years to help families get the health coverage they need, including setting the admirable goal of ensuring coverage for every child in Washington by 2010. The investments we've made are paying off: Over the past two years the number of uninsured children in our state dropped 23%. This year, it's time to finish the job by passing comprehensive legislation that creates accessible coverage options for all children so that they can get the health care they need to grow and thrive.

We call on lawmakers to: Pass legislation that ensures full health care coverage for all children by 2010.

## *"Brain fuel" for hungry schoolchildren*

Hungry children can't focus on learning. Increasing expectations of students make it imperative that we give children every available tool to succeed in school. The National School Lunch Program ensures that low-income children don't face the barrier of an empty stomach. We can boost participation in the program by eliminating the "co-pay" some low-income families must pay for school lunch. This action will especially benefit children of color, who are more likely to live in families qualifying for free or reduced-price meals.

We call on lawmakers to: Eliminate the "co-pay" some children in low-income households currently pay for school lunch.

## *Quality for our youngest learners*

Scientific evidence is mounting that the first three years of life are critical to building the "brain architecture" that gives a child the foundation to succeed in school and life. We know that high-quality early learning experiences can make the difference between being ready for school and struggling from the very first day. This year, we should build on the foundation set last year to make quality early learning available to all Washington families.

We call on lawmakers to: **1)** Fund implementation of the Quality Rating and Improvement System (QRIS) to promote high quality child care and give providers incentives and support for increasing the quality of care, and **2)** Increase investments in childcare reimbursement rates so that low-income families can find and afford high quality early learning programs.

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