



CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families

Stand Strong for Kids: 2011 Legislative Agenda

Maintain Apple Health for Kids

Covering all kids made good sense in good times and makes even better sense in hard times. Apple Health for Kids is a popular, cost-effective health coverage program with a track record of success. The federal government awards our state millions of dollars in additional, flexible funding annually in honor of Washington's accomplishments in children's health. Thousands of parents who have lost employer-based coverage turn to Apple Health for Kids to secure regular check-ups and vaccinations for their children. Such services ensure that short-term childhood illnesses don't develop into chronic and costly health problems. **Lawmakers should maintain Apple Health for all currently eligible Washington children.**

Continue child care assistance

Working Connections and Seasonal Child Care allow parents to stay at work and move toward self-sufficiency – a key tenet of the state's WorkFirst system. Without them, the cost of child care is out of reach for too many families. More changes to the eligibility criteria for both programs will have huge impacts on the lives of children whose families no longer qualify. Working Connections is the most successful welfare diversion program we have – cutting it will further damage our economic recovery and increase costs to the state. Small business child care centers would lay off staff or close their doors, increasing the scarcity of quality child care and making the labor market even worse. Valuable public infrastructure, in the form of trained child care workers and licensed centers, would be destroyed. **Lawmakers should maintain Working Connections and Seasonal Child Care assistance.**

Preserve food assistance that feeds hungry families

The Basic Food program (food stamps) is a crucial source of assistance for families that injects money into fragile local economies. The State Food Assistance program extends the positive reach of food stamps by ensuring their availability to very low-income families who were previously eligible prior to a federal law change. Eliminating it would deal another setback to local communities, damage the program's effectiveness and worsen childhood hunger.

Lawmakers should stand by all hungry families by maintaining the State Food Assistance program.

Raise revenue to secure our future

For more than two years, the poor economy and budget cuts have reduced vital services that help families raise healthy kids. Our state's revenue system badly needs reform so that it generates resources fairly for Washingtonians in bad times as well as good. This year, lawmakers should close corporate tax exemptions that are not in the public interest. **Revenue must be raised to allow for a balanced approach to the budget and preserve essential services for children and families.**

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