



Washington State Senate

March 26, 2013

Senator Andy Hill, Senate Ways and Means Committee Chair
Senator James Hargrove, Senate Ways and Means Committee Ranking Member

RE: Operating Budget Request – \$42 million to restore State Food Assistance Benefits

Dear Senators Hill and Hargrove,

Washington's future prosperity and the quality of life it has to offer depends on what we do today to ensure our state's children have what they need to grow up healthy and become strong leaders, workers and parents participating in society.

Hunger is a roadblock to opportunity because hungry children cannot learn. The correlation between hunger, poor health, and learning is well understood. If children continue to arrive at school unprepared for academic success we will never close the opportunity gap.

For more than 15 years Washington state government has strategically leveraged resources to make sure that food stamps are available to help families when times are tough. The Legislature led the country in 1997 in establishing the State Food Assistance program, and we continue to operate it in a cost-effective manner. At a time when an estimated one-in-four Washington children live in food-insecure households, the 2011 cut to State Food Assistance deepened the economic inequality for many of the youngest Washingtonians.

Cash-strapped families are skimping on grocery items that build children's bodies and minds and keep elders healthy. While food banks are an extraordinary tool to fight hunger, they cannot fill the holes left in family budgets by the cut and in many of our communities are overwhelmed by the rising need.

The legislature should restore these funds so that all children and families who need help filling the hunger gap are treated equally.

Our success as a state depends on great educational outcomes for all children – restoring State Food Assistance benefits would be a move in the right direction.

Sincerely,



Washington State Senate

Senator Joe Fain
47th Legislative District

Senator Andy Billig
3rd Legislative District

Senator Paull Shin
21st Legislative District

Senator Steve Litzow
41st Legislative District

Senator Bruce Dammeier
25th Legislative District

Senator Adam Kline
37th Legislative District

Senator McAuliffe
1st Legislative District

Senator Steve Hobbs
44th Legislative District

Senator Bob Hasegawa
11th Legislative District

Senator Brian Hatfield
19th Legislative District

Senator Annette Cleveland
49th Legislative District

Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles
36th Legislative District



Washington State Senate

Senator Ed Murray
43rd Legislative District

Senator Kevin Ranker
40th Legislative District

Senator Nick Harper
38th Legislative District

Senator David Frockt
46th Legislative District

Senator Christine Rolfes
23rd Legislative District

Senator Mike Hewitt
16th Legislative District

Senator Karen Fraser
22nd Legislative District

Senator Steve Conway
29th Legislative District

Senator Karen Keiser
33rd Legislative District

Senator Jeannie Darnielle
27th Legislative District

Senator Nathan Schlicher
26th Legislative District

Senator Maralyn Chase
32nd Legislative District



Washington State Senate

Handwritten signature of Tracey Eide in cursive.

Senator Tracey Eide
30th Legislative District

Handwritten signature of Pam Roach in cursive.

Senator Pam Roach
31st Legislative District

Cc: Governor Jay Inslee
Senate Majority Leader Rodney Tom
Senate Minority Leader Ed Murray
Senate Republican Leader Mark Schoesler