



## CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

*A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families*

**Contacts:**

Adam Hyla, Communications Director, Children's Alliance, (206) 324-0340, ext. 18 or (206) 326-9964; [adam@childrensalliance.org](mailto:adam@childrensalliance.org)

Jon Gould, Deputy Director, Children's Alliance, (206) 324-0340, ext. 19 or (206) 683-2674; [jon@childrensalliance.org](mailto:jon@childrensalliance.org)

## **GOV. INSLEE TAKES PRUDENT STEP TO FEED HUNGRY KIDS**

Protects families from harmful federal cuts

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

THURS., APRIL 10—Gov. Jay Inslee has announced that he'll protect Washington families from new, harmful cuts to the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, or food stamps).

The Governor will adjust the state's utility-assistance payments to certain eligible households from \$1 to \$20.01, ensuring that thousands of families get the food assistance they need to feed their children.

"Governor Inslee's decision to protect Washington families from food stamp cuts is a smart and principled decision—and it is the right thing to do by our kids. Hungry kids can't learn. Food stamps are our number-one defense against childhood hunger," says Jon Gould, deputy director of the Children's Alliance.

In a provision known as "heat and eat," since 2009 Washington state has granted \$1 per year in federal Low Income Household Energy Assistance Program (LIHEAP) funds to each Washington household qualifying for food stamps. The \$1 in federal assistance allowed them to claim a utility deduction. The result: Each household received up to \$90 per month in additional SNAP benefits.

But the Farm Bill raised the threshold amount of LIHEAP matching funding from \$1 to \$20—a move intended to put a stop to this assistance. The State Department of Social and Health Services estimated that 1 in 3 food stamps households, unable to qualify for the deduction, would see their benefits drop. Anti-hunger advocates estimate that families deplete their monthly SNAP benefits in 2-3 weeks.

In response, Gov. Inslee is utilizing additional federal LIHEAP funds to mitigate the benefit loss. Once per year, the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) will disburse \$20.01 in LIHEAP benefits to approximately 200,000 Washington households in order for them to retain

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current benefit levels. These households are composed of families whose rent includes utilities. DSHS will screen other families receiving SNAP—those who pay utilities separately from rent—for eligibility for LIHEAP.

Inslee’s decision preserves an estimated \$70 million in federal SNAP dollars over the 2014-2018 duration of the Farm Bill. Every \$5 in SNAP spent by recipients returns \$9 in local economic activity.

Children’s Alliance staff met with state officials from the Department of Social and Health Services and the Governor’s office on March 6 to examine ways that the Farm Bill’s harmful cut could be prevented. We congratulate Inslee’s staff for moving quickly.

“We thank Gov. Inslee for his courageous response to the needs of hungry children,” Gould said.

Cuts to SNAP hurt kids. More than 434,000 of Washington’s 1.6 million children live with at least one family member receiving SNAP. And 1 in 4 lives in a home where there isn’t enough food. On a national level, Latino and African American households are 60-70 percent more likely to experience hunger than the national average, according to the Children’s Alliance 2013 report, [\*Hungry in Washington\*](#).

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*The Children’s Alliance ([www.childrealliance.org](http://www.childrealliance.org)) is a statewide public policy advocacy organization that works at the state and federal level to ensure that all children have what they need to thrive.*