



## CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

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

**For Immediate Release**

**CONTACTS:**

**Linda Stone, Eastern Washington Director**, (509) 747-7205, cell: (509) 844-1314  
**Ruth Schubert, Communications Manager**, (206) 324-0340 x 18, cell: (206) 498-0185

### Value of Food Stamp Benefits in Washington Shrinking *Shoring up value of program essential in 2007 Farm Bill*

**May 21, 2007 (Seattle)** —Imagine you had only \$1.03 per person to spend on each meal. What would you buy at the supermarket? A pound of chicken costs \$1.99, a gallon of milk \$3.19. Top Ramen costs \$.27.

This is the very real dilemma faced by nearly 500,000 Washington residents every month as they try to make their food stamps stretch to cover a month's worth of food. Most can't. In fact, in a 2006 survey conducted at food banks in Western Washington, half of those interviewed said their food stamps lasted only two out of four weeks each month.

The U.S. Congress this year has the opportunity to arrest a decade-long erosion in food stamp benefits as it renews the program in the 2007 Farm Bill. Over the past ten years, a typical household of three has seen the value of their food stamp benefits drop by 11%.

"It's imperative that Congress take action for hungry families," said Linda Stone, Eastern Washington Director of the Children's Alliance. "The actual purchasing power of Food Stamp benefits has been going down year after year, making it harder and harder for poor families to put food on the table for themselves and their children."

According to a report released today by the Children's Alliance, "[Food Stamp Erosion in Washington](#)," the food stamp benefits received by over a half million Washingtonians are eroding in real value with each passing year, making it harder for struggling families to afford an adequate diet. The report also states that:

- Next year, a typical working parent with two children will receive roughly \$300 less in food stamp benefits than they would have if benefits had not been cut in 1996.
- In all, Washington residents will lose \$33 million in food stamp benefits next year as a result of the cuts.
- The declining value of food stamps means that Washington will lose \$61 million in economic activity next year.
- As the University of Washington's Adam Drewnowski, PhD, has determined, a healthy diet with plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables, lean protein and whole grains, costs more. With obesity rates on the rise, and the special dietary needs of the elderly and infirm, Food Stamps simply don't provide enough for a healthy diet.

Advocates from across the state are joining together to urge Congress to stop the erosion of food stamp benefits ([see letter](#)).

“Every month food banks across Washington serve hundreds of people whose food stamps ran out before the end of the month,” said Tracy Wilking, director of the Washington Food Coalition. “Food stamps are a crucial support for many Washingtonians, but each recipient now gets only about \$1.03 per meal. That’s just not enough to help families put food on the table every day.”

Nearly 275,000 households in Washington cannot always afford adequate food, a condition the government calls “food insecurity.” Many of these households receive food stamps but still are not able to afford sufficient food because their food stamp benefits are so modest.

Food stamp benefits are worth less with each passing year because of budget cuts Congress made to the program in 1996. The impact of the cuts is growing every year.

Food stamps boost local economies by increasing total food purchases, the report notes. Thus, the steady decline in food stamp values is hurting Washington’s economy. If food stamps continue to shrink, Washington will lose \$61 million in economic activity in 2008.

“That cut shifted the burden of supporting low-wage working families to food banks,” said Wilking on behalf of Washington Food Coalition member food banks. “We don’t have the resources to continue to make up for the lost food stamp benefits.”

An inadequate diet can do a great deal of harm to a child’s health and development. “Research studies have shown that an inadequate diet can affect many aspects of a child’s life, from their health to their ability to succeed at work and in school,” said Linda Stone of the Children’s Alliance.

By improving food stamp benefits Congress can help protect needy households in Washington and other states from going hungry while also improving local economies. At a minimum, the report concludes, Congress should stop the problem from getting worse.

- To view the full report, “Food Stamp Erosion in Washington,” go to: [http://childrensalliance.org/4Download/hunger/wa\\_erosion\\_rpt.pdf](http://childrensalliance.org/4Download/hunger/wa_erosion_rpt.pdf)
- To view the letter of support: [http://childrensalliance.org/4Download/hunger/ahnc\\_signon.pdf](http://childrensalliance.org/4Download/hunger/ahnc_signon.pdf)

###

*The Children’s Alliance is a statewide public policy advocacy organization that works at the local, state and federal levels to ensure that all children have the things they need to thrive. Current campaigns focus on health care, anti-hunger and nutrition, foster care, and early learning. Our membership includes 128 organizations and more than 7,500 individuals statewide.*

*To learn more about the Children’s Alliance, go to [www.childrensalliance.org](http://www.childrensalliance.org)*