

STATE POLICY AGENDA 2019-2020

UNITED WAY OF PIERCE COUNTY: TIER 1 PRIORITIES



United Way of Pierce County

Advocacy is a vital component in lifting 15,000 households out of poverty and into financial stability by 2028. This public policy agenda represents current positions of United Way of Pierce County as well as supportive positions for the multiple partners leading work to reduce barriers for struggling families or individuals. To tackle deeply entrenched and complex social problems we need to collaborate to achieve significant and lasting social change. No single policy, government department, organization or program can tackle or solve the increasingly complex problem of poverty.

Washington Information (WIN) 2-1-1 [Increase Statewide Funding in Governor's Capital Budget] In the 2017 budget, Washington was awarded \$1.5 million to continue to provide statewide infrastructure for 2-1-1. The 2019-2021 Governor's budget reflects a 33% cut of \$.5 million. Our South Sound 2-1-1 fields nearly 90,000 calls for help annually and serves Pierce, Thurston and Lewis Counties. The addition of specialized navigators in housing, mental health, transportation and basic needs provided adds targeted support that stabilizes individuals and families and enables them to gain self-sufficiency. With the recent federal government shutdown, 2-1-1 was the clearing-house for assistance in the state and is the resource for individuals/families to turn to. *Lead agency:* United Way

Universal Home Visiting: Help Me Grow [SB 5683] During the 2018 legislative session, Pierce County received funding from the Department of Children Youth & Family for community planning to design a comprehensive system of support for families (pregnant through age 5). The 2018- 2019 Governor's budget includes dollars to design a system statewide. We ask that the Governor's budget includes funding to design the statewide system with local flexibility for Help Me Grow implementation in Pierce County to work in 3 high need neighborhoods where child dependency is very high. Implementation will also include the utilization of 2-1-1 navigators. *Lead agency:* Project Child Success; *Supporting agency:* United Way

Increase Access and Affordability of High-Quality Childcare [Increase Statewide Funding in Governor's Capital Budget] Parents can't work if their childcare is lacking and the childcare provider workforce needs a livable wage to support their own families. By holistically addressing the childcare predicament to meet the needs of children, families, child care providers, businesses and our overall economy, we support the WA Childcare Access Now Act. *Lead agency:* Early Learning Action Alliance; *Supporting agencies:* United Way, Project Child Success

Eliminate School Lunch Co-Pay for Low-Income Students [HB 1892] Kids do better in school when they don't have to worry about affording meals. Some families struggle even to pay the cost of a reduced-price lunch. By eliminating the co-pay for all students (Pre-K to Grade 12) and increasing the number of schools using Community Eligibility (more students receive free meals), low-income kids can focus on learning, instead of being hungry. *Lead agency:* Bethel School District; *Supporting agency:* United Way

Working Family Tax Credit (WFTC) Bill [HB 1527] This became law in 2008 and is Washington State's version of the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC), the federal government's most successful poverty reduction program. But the state legislature has never funded the WFTC, missing a vital opportunity to rebalance our tax code for low- and moderate-income Washingtonians. If implemented, the WFTC would refund a portion of the state sales tax (average \$400 to eligible households), thereby boosting families' economic security and mitigating the impact of our state's regressive tax structure. *Lead agency:* Poverty Action Network; *Supporting agency:* United Way

Expand Access to Fresh Fruit & Vegetables for SNAP & WIC Households [HB 1587/ SB 5684] Washington offers the Fresh Bucks and the Farmers Market Nutrition programs, making fruits and vegetables more affordable for SNAP & WIC participants by providing benefits that offset the cost of produce at participating farmers markets and grocery stores. These programs have a proven track record of increasing consumption of fresh, locally grown produce, putting money in the pockets of our growers while helping households eat more nutritious meals. We ask for continued support in providing state funds.

Raise Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) Benefits [HB 1603/ SB 5684] In Washington State, WorkFirst, the TANF program, is designed to protect low-income families from the harm of deep poverty and support them to transition to stability. Families in poverty often have few or no assets in tough times and they need cash for basic needs: rent and utilities, personal care items, as well as gas or bus fare. Adjusting TANF cash assistance to the cost of living will help more families living at or below poverty afford the basics. *Lead agency:* Budget & Policy Center and Poverty Action Network; *Supporting agency:* United Way

For more detailed information, visit www.uwpc.org/advocate-lend-your-voice or email LindsayT@uwpc.org. 2.14.19