



# Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition

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POLICY & ADVOCACY

IN OLYMPIA

# How to be a great advocate for farmers markets:

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## **What is advocacy?**

Working to influence public policy to create systemic or institutional change.

In other words:

**Speaking up on an issue you care about**

# Relationships matter a lot for effective advocacy:

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When you are trying to make policy changes, electeds want to understand your issues – so they need to know you.

They also need to know they can trust you – and that takes building a relationship with them.

Everyone needs friends – invite partners to join your effort & show you're not alone.

# How to build relationships with lawmakers:

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**Time:** Electeds get countless invitations, see hundreds of constituents, cover many issue areas, etc. Building a relationship with them takes time.

**Timing:** It's important that electeds hear from you year round – not just at budget hearings or during legislative session when you want something from them.

**Site Visits:** Invite lawmakers to your market, a vendor farm – anywhere that shows your work & impact on your community.

# Site visits make a big impact on lawmakers:

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Invite lawmakers to your market, a vendor farm – anywhere that shows your work & impact on your community.

Site visits take planning: Think ahead about what you want an elected to see, understand and really know about your market and plan accordingly.

## Hearings and office visits:

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Go to council hearings, or Olympia during session, or even DC! It's great to see democracy in action – and to show lawmakers that you want to be part of that action.

Don't just go when you have something *you* want – show up for your partners' issues, too. Lawmakers will notice you're engaged in your community.

Bring community partners – show *your* relationships & connections among *their* constituents and issues.



## Letters, emails, action alerts, phone calls:

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A handwritten letter is more effective than an email (send only postcards to Congress).

If you are writing an email, the subject line is critical: make your issue clear right off.

If you are signing a form email or petition, BEGIN with a personal message.

Prepare your message before you dial – be clear & brief.

**WA LEGISLATIVE HOTLINE: 800- 562- 6000**



# Our state legislature is in session!

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- Legislative session began on Monday – it's a long session (105 days) with a LOT of new faces
- Biennial budget will be written this year – dealing with an estimated \$12 BILLION deficit over next 4 years
- Tons of opportunities to get involved & advocate for smart programs and investments for hunger & ag



# What to expect from 2025

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- A new governor & his new policy staff, new state agency leadership – and nearly a third of the legislators are new
- Ferguson is talking about cuts first (6% of agency staff) before new revenue – but the legislature writes the budget and bills
- Legislators need to be educated about your issues because very hard decisions are going to be made

# AHNC Legislative Priorities:

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## Overview:

All of our Coalition's priorities are focused on fighting hunger and all connect to recommendations from Washington's **Food Policy Forum** – a multi-sector, bipartisan group focused on strengthening Washington's food system.

Most of our priorities are budget items. These have different processes through a legislative session – less transparent, but also no cut-off points: there's time to advocate on the budget!



# AHNC Legislative Priorities: Hunger & Ag

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## Preserve current funding levels for Fruit & Vegetable Incentive Programs

FVIP make fruits and vegetables more affordable for SNAP shoppers and low income patients by providing additional benefits to spend on fruits & veggies. Also, DOH's federal GusNIP grant expires this year and they will re-apply – but it requires a 1:1 match for federal funds.

**Budget request: \$6 million to maintain current service levels**  
(agency request funded in Inslee's budget)



# AHNC Hunger & Ag Priorities:

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## **Preserve current funding levels for SUN Bucks**

In its first year, SUN Bucks (aka Summer EBT) brought in more than \$71 million in federal food benefits for nearly 600,000 low income K-12 students across the state. Benefits are redeemable at any SNAP retailer – like your markets! Benefits are federal funds but program administrative costs are shared 50/50 between the state & USDA.

**Budget request: \$8.85 million to support program administration**  
(agency request funded in Inslee's budget)



# AHNC Hunger Priorities (cont'd)

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## **Extend funding for food banks to address historic demand**

Food bank demand has skyrocketed: there were *13.4 million client visits* to food banks in SFY 2023-24 - compared to 7.8 million in 2019. Amidst historic demand, food donations are down and food banks need extraordinary help.

**Budget request: \$93 million to support food banks & pantries statewide**  
(agency request funded in Inslee's budget)



# AHNC Hunger Priorities (cont'd)

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## **Preserve current funding levels for senior nutrition programs**

Nationwide senior hunger rose 20% from 2021 to 2014 and now nearly 1 in 10 WA seniors live in poverty – the highest rate in at least a decade. DSHS supports local senior nutrition programs like hot meals in senior centers and home delivered meals (Meals on Wheels) and grocery delivery.

**Budget request: \$35.4 million to maintain current caseload** (agency request – \$28 million was funded in Inslee's budget)



# AHNC Hunger Priorities (cont'd)

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## **Free School Meals for ALL**

Gov. Ferguson priority – this is the only bill AHNC is leading. Big cost - but big impact, especially for working families.

Rep. Berg & Sen. Riccelli will sponsor the bills, and Rep. Berg is also working on a funding mechanism to pay for critical K-12 services and plans to include free meals in that bill.

WA would be the 9<sup>th</sup> state in the country to pass this legislation!



# Building our coalitions

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Farmers markets, farmers, and community partners getting involved will be KEY to getting state funds for these critical programs:

- Sign up for AHNC action alerts & join our lobby day on **Monday, Feb 24!**
- Make sure every legislator – *especially* new ones – hear from you all this session. Become their expert!
- Sign on to community support letters for these issues





# How to get informed & involved

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- Sign up for alerts from AHNC:
- <https://wa-ahnc.constantcontactsites.com>
- Register for Hunger Action Day – **Monday, Feb. 24** in Olympia
- Talk up the bills & budget items in your community: Make sure *your* supporters support these requests





**Questions? Call or email:**  
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