

# Advocacy for Farmers Markets: State Funding, Smart Policymaking & Supporting Partners

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POLICY & ADVOCACY IN TOUGH TIMES

# Goals for today:

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## Goals:

- ❑ Skills to help you build relationships with electeds to make a positive difference for your market & your community
- ❑ Resources to help you be an effective advocate by knowing who and how to talk about your issues

# 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.

Invite a few key vendors and (known) shoppers to join so they can tell their own story about your market.

# Community partnerships make site visits even more compelling:

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Invite partners to demonstrate your community connections – Extension staff, local food bank, WIC agency, Chamber of Commerce, etc. could all be good voices for the issues & stories you want them to understand.

# Hearings and office visits:

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Go to council hearings, or Olympia during session, telephone town halls, 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**

**CAPITOL SWITCHBOARD (H&S): 202- 224-3121**



# Our state legislature is in session!

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- Legislative session begins on 2nd Monday in January – it's a long session (105 days) because biennial budget will be written this year
- A LOT of new faces – a few were appointed as recently as 3 weeks ago.
- Biggest issue: 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 will unveil his budget priorities this week after asking agencies for 6% budget cuts. But the legislature writes the budget and bills
- BIG concerns about federal budget cuts & layoffs
- Legislators need to be educated about your issues because very hard decisions are being made

# 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: \$11.8. million to support program administration**  
(agency request funded in Inslee's budget)

# 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)



# SUN Bucks by the numbers – and by county:

## SUN Bucks is an evidence-based program

Research shows that providing families with summer grocery benefits reduces childhood hunger and supports healthier diets<sup>2</sup>. Children who received SUN Bucks consumed more whole grains, fruit and vegetables.

Research from *the American Academy of Pediatrics* shows that Summer EBT programs, like SUN Bucks, reduce the number of children experiencing very low food security by **one-third**.

2024 SUN Bucks Participation by County <sup>4</sup>		
County	# School-Aged Children Receiving Benefits	Total Federal Benefits Received
Adams	4,812	\$577,440
Asotin	1,895	\$227,400
Benton	21,840	\$2,620,800
Chelan	8,139	\$976,680
Clallam	5,043	\$605,160
Clark	38,976	\$4,677,120
Columbia	278	\$33,360
Cowlitz	11,530	\$1,383,600
Douglas	4,809	\$577,080
Ferry	903	\$108,360
Franklin	16,679	\$2,001,480
Garfield	179	\$21,480
Grant	15,219	\$1,826,280
Grays Harbor	8,378	\$1,005,360
Island	4,809	\$577,080
Jefferson	1,571	\$188,520
King	121,065	\$14,527,800
Kitsap	15,067	\$1,808,040
Kittitas	2,469	\$296,280
Klickitat	1,753	\$210,360
Lewis	8,701	\$1,044,120
Lincoln	1,042	\$125,040
Mason	5,702	\$684,240
Okanogan	5,924	\$710,880
Pacific	1,767	\$212,040
Pend Oreille	1,373	\$164,760
Pierce	75,885	\$9,106,200
San Juan	729	\$87,480
Skagit	11,485	\$1,378,200
Skamania	532	\$63,840
Snohomish	53,767	\$6,452,040
Spokane	45,641	\$5,476,920
Stevens	4,880	\$585,600
Thurston	23,089	\$2,770,680
Unknown	1,694	\$203,280
Wahkiakum	308	\$36,960
Walla Walla	5,740	\$688,800
Whatcom	13,983	\$1,677,960
Whitman	2,165	\$259,800
Yakima	46,266	\$5,551,920
Statewide	596,087	\$71,530,440

# 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 2011 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!

# New revenue is EVERYONE'S priority

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Minimum deficit of \$12 billion – and a tax code that has not kept up with WA's population:

**Washington needs new, sustainable, proportional revenue!**

There are – and will be – many options on the table but the bills (mostly) haven't been released yet.

# 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: [www.HungerFreeWA.org](http://www.HungerFreeWA.org)
- 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
- Talk up these policy issues in your community: Make sure *your* supporters support these requests



# Congress is planning a budget right now: BILLIONS in cuts to USDA (and more)

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- Budget reconciliation is a budget “blueprint” that sets spending targets generally – policy committees decide specifics.
- Reconciliation is NOT subject to Senate filibuster – it requires only half + one votes to pass.
- \$430 billion in possible cuts to SNAP - \$1.6 trillion cuts to Medicaid... that’s just the beginning.
- Decisions are being made RIGHT NOW – our Republicans need to hear from you about impacts of these kinds of cuts.





**Questions? Call or email:**  
**Claire Lane, Director**  
**Anti-Hunger & Nutrition Coalition**  
**E: [Claire.Lane2@gmail.com](mailto:Claire.Lane2@gmail.com)**  
**P: (206) 446-0966**

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