



CHILDREN'S ALLIANCE

A Voice for Washington's Children, Youth & Families

State Food Assistance Program

December 21, 2010

The Basic Food program (food stamps) is a crucial source of economic assistance for families that injects money into fragile local economies. The State Food Assistance (SFA) program extends the positive reach of food stamps by ensuring their availability to very low-income families who were previously eligible, prior to a federal law change. Eliminating this funding would deal another setback to local communities, damage the program's effectiveness and worsen childhood hunger.

Lawmakers should ensure the effectiveness of our anti-hunger efforts by maintaining the State Food Assistance program for all currently eligible recipients.

Where State Food Assistance Recipients Live

| | | |
|--------------------|---------------|-------------|
| King County | 5,963 | 43% |
| Snohomish County | 1,681 | 12% |
| Pierce County | 1,153 | 8% |
| Spokane County | 1,045 | 7% |
| All other counties | 9,842 | 30% |
| TOTAL | 13,965 | 100% |

Of the 31,000 people who either receive State Food Assistance or benefit indirectly from the program by living in a household where another family member receives it, half are children.

State Food Assistance is a uniquely Washington invention. It began when Congress eliminated food stamp benefits for most legal immigrants in 1997. In a bipartisan effort to fill the gap created by the federal government, Governor Gary Locke and the legislature gained federal permission to purchase "food stamps" for these populations with state funds. Eight states fund state food assistance programs, including California.

Washington must continue providing consistent benefits to hungry people no matter who they are. Among those served are victims of domestic violence, crime victims assisting law enforcement, and citizens of Micronesia and the Marshall Islands, countries with compacts of free association with the U.S. Some of these individuals will eventually gain green cards and naturalize, and **all are taxpaying residents of our state.**

As a critical part of our public anti-hunger infrastructure, SFA is a form of economic stimulus: Families that buy food are putting money back into their local communities. State Food Assistance benefits, like federal Food Stamp benefits, go directly to community grocery stores across the state, making a \$9 local economic impact for every \$5 in benefits spent on food, according to the USDA. **The \$9 million cut would cause local communities to miss out on \$17 million in economic impact.**

This program helps thousands of families put food on their tables; provides a safety net to immigrants and refugees with extremely limited resources; and keeps critical dollars circulating in our state's economy.

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