

# Washington Academy Legislative Priorities 2024

## Supporting the health and well-being of students in Washington State

Food insecurity affects many students in Washington State. According to non-profit Feeding America, 1 in 8 children in Washington state face hunger and nearly  $\frac{1}{3}$  of households receiving SNAP benefits have children<sup>1</sup>.

- Nutritious school meals provided to all students increases accessibility, decreases stigma, and removes cost and paperwork as ongoing barriers to food security for vulnerable students.
- Summer EBT addresses the increases in hunger seen during the school break. **DSHS must be funded to ensure the program can run in 2024, and maintain access to nutritious meals for Washington students.**

## Addressing food insecurity in other vulnerable communities

“Affording food is such a challenge in Washington state that residents who experience food insecurity say their grocery bills are their biggest source of financial stress” according to a survey completed between December 2022 and December 2023 by University of Washington researchers in the School of Public Health and Washington State University<sup>2</sup>. Not only that, food insecurity was higher amongst BIPOC communities. Hunger relief organizations report struggling to keep up with increased demand for emergency food support.

- Extend EFAP funding for food Banks and pantries across Washington. **Invest in a one-time allocation of \$15 million in WSDA's Emergency Food Assistance Program.**
- Seniors and people living with disabilities often rely on meal delivery programs in order to meet their basic nutritional needs, but the number of people relying on these programs is growing, and funding has not kept up with demand. **Invest \$15.2 million per year at DSHS to help these vulnerable groups to access meal programs through Area Agencies on Aging or Meals on Wheels.**

## Registered Dietitian Nutritionists are your source for evidence-based nutrition expertise

In Washington State, over 3,000 Registered Dietitian Nutritionists support the health of Washington residents through clinical and outpatient care, private practice, public health, school nutrition programs, emergency food organizations, community program support and more. Ensure and expand coverage of Medical Nutrition Therapy to Washington residents for disease prevention and management.

1) <https://www.feedingamerica.org/hunger-in-america/washington>

2) <https://nutr.uw.edu/news/low-income-washington-state-households-still-struggling-with-food-insecurity-a-s-pandemic-protections-end/>