

2021 Policy Agenda

Working together to tackle deeply entrenched and complex social problems, we can disrupt the systems and policies that disproportionately impact Black, Brown and Indigenous people of color in order to achieve significant and lasting social change.

OUR BOLD GOAL
Lift 15,000 households from poverty and into financial stability by 2028.

TIER 1 PRIORITIES



Affordable Housing [HB 1035 & HB 1101] Increase Access to Affordable Housing and Invest in Solutions to the Homeless Public Health Crisis

- Secure and increase funding for programs that increase access to affordable housing and prevent and end the crisis of homelessness.
- Provide policy and resource incentives to boost the creation of more affordable housing by public, private and nonprofit sectors.
- Ensure adequate permanent supported housing including resources such as behavioral health services for people impacted by chronic homelessness.
- Invest \$250 million in the Housing Trust Fund to build and preserve permanent affordable housing across the state.



Food Security & Nutrition (SNAP) & Updating the State Standard of Need (Cash Assistance) [HB 1151]

- Strengthen food stamps by creating a transitional food benefit; extending funding for SNAP fruit/vegetable incentives; and, bringing parity to our state's food assistance program for legally residing immigrants.
- Modernize the outdated 1991 standard of need for cash assistance to better reflect actual costs of living in Washington.



Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) [SB 5214] – TANF Policy Restoration

- Expand the exemptions to the TANF time limits that disproportionately hurt Black, Brown, Indigenous and families of color and ease punitive measures put in place during the Great Recession.
- Enact commonsense time limit extensions and ease harsh sanction policies, including full-family sanctions.



Washington 2-1-1 (Operating Budget)

- The WA 211 network is requesting \$3M in funding for the statewide 2-1-1 system to support the 50% service level increase helping residents impacted by COVID-19 and the economic crisis.
- Early on during the pandemic crisis, WA 211 rapidly doubled service capacity and increased operating hours, handling over 50,000 COVID-specific calls in less than two months.

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STRONG FAMILIES



The Fair Start for Kids Act 2.0 [SB 5237] – Every Child Deserves a Fair Start

- Provide immediate support to child care providers and expand access to affordable child care, especially infant and school-age care, so parents are able to return to work while children gain valuable learning opportunities.
- Provide access to comprehensive, high-quality perinatal to age five services so children enter kindergarten with the social-emotional, physical, cognitive, and language skills they need to be successful and can progress academically and developmentally along with their peers.



Increase Access, Affordability, and Quality of Child Care and Early Learning for Working Families [SB 5023]

- Affordable and accessible child care helps families by allowing parents to build a career and contribute to our economy, as well as help businesses reduce turnover.
- Children with access to early education programs read earlier, graduate high school at higher rates and have more professional opportunities.
- Before the COVID crisis, most middle- and lower-income families struggled to find and pay for quality child care and pre-K education. Working parents and their employers depend on this care, and their kids require it to be successful in school and life.



Help Me Grow Pierce County (HMGPC) A Community-Driven Resource and Referral System for Young Children & Their Families

- Continue HMGPC pilot by continuing the state's investment at \$1.74 million. HMGPC is a community-driven resource and referral linkage system that connects young children and their families to appropriate services and community support, now in year 2 of implementation, and serves about 1,000 children ages 0 to 5 and expectant families per month.
- The pilot seeks to ensure that all families in Pierce County have the resources they need to thrive, with a goal outcome of preventing child welfare involvement.

In Budget

TIER 2 PRIORITY



Working Families' Tax Credit [HB 1297] Provide an income boost to working people in the form of a tax refund.

- Build on the success of the federal EITC by modernizing the definition of work and including people who work hard but are excluded from the EITC – like immigrants, caregivers, and young workers without kids.
- Update and simplify the Working Families Tax Credit policy to create flat cash payments to those eligible for the federal EITC, including those who file using an Individual Taxpayer Identification Numbers (ITIN).