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January 16, 2020

Governor Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

Please accept Northwest Harvest's letter of support for the **Poverty Reduction Work Group's 10-year Plan for the Future to reduce poverty and inequality in Washington state**. For the past two years, PRWG has worked diligently to develop a plan that, if implemented, will meaningfully and measurably reduce poverty and inequality in Washington state. We are grateful to you for your support of poverty reduction, and look forward to bringing the plan to action.

Reducing poverty and inequality is critically important to the mission of Northwest Harvest, a statewide food justice organization with a mission to create more equitable access nutritious food for all in Washington. We focus on food access because we believe that food is a low cost catalyst to help build healthier communities: with consistent access to nutritious food, children can focus on learning in schools; adults can be healthy to find and keep good paying jobs; seniors can be active and independent. But food is only an essential ingredient to stabilizing crises: we know that hunger persists in households with limited incomes that are insufficient to meet all basic needs. We find it immoral that anyone feels they must choose between food or paying their rent, their utilities bills, their medications. When we reduce poverty, we reduce food insecurity; consistent food access takes care of one hole in an otherwise stretched and limited budget. Poverty and the racial disparities that sustain poverty are the root causes to hunger which is why we are committed to working with others, to play our part in a larger plan to reduce poverty and its discriminatory drivers.

We understand that the PRWG co-lead agencies will be conducting a series of community engagement meetings and finalizing the *10-year Plan for the Future* this summer. We look forward to supporting their efforts. In the meantime, we urge your continued support of the strategic plan and taking immediate steps to begin implementing it by:

- Directing state agencies to write action plans to fulfill the strategies outlined in the plan;
- Elevating the influence and expertise of people most affected by poverty in the implementation of the plan;
- Task the Office of Equity to develop trainings for all state employees in the historical and systemic impacts of racism and to do a racial disparity impact study of all state agency policies;
- Enact changes to clean up our upside down tax system that benefit low and moderate income households, and
- Fund the PRWG's short-term priorities in the next budget cycle.

We believe these actions will lay a strong foundation for the full implementation of the plan over the next 10 years, and provide immediate, urgent relief for the 1.8 million Washingtonians currently struggling to make ends meet in communities throughout our state.

Thank you for supporting the Poverty Reduction Work Group and your passion for making Washington state a place where every child, adults, and family can thrive. If we can do anything further to support this effort, please do not hesitate to ask.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'CW', written over a horizontal line.

Christina Wong, Director of Public Policy & Advocacy  
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