AN ACT Relating to addressing hunger relief; creating new sections; making appropriations; and declaring an emergency.

BE IT ENACTED BY THE LEGISLATURE OF THE STATE OF WASHINGTON:

NEW SECTION.  Sec. 1. Appropriations in this act are for the fiscal biennium ending June 30, 2023.

NEW SECTION.  Sec. 2. The legislature recognizes that food insecurity has many negative impacts on health and well-being. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the legislature has prioritized meeting people's basic needs, including investing in getting fresh food from Washington farmers to families, expanding the community eligibility provision so thousands of low-income students can enjoy healthy nutritious meals, providing additional funding for seniors to spend at local farmers markets, and supporting the emergency food system.

The legislature finds that even prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, one in 10 Washington households were food insecure. Food insecurity rates rose when the pandemic began and have remained high, especially for those with very low incomes, Black and Hispanic households, families with children, young adults, and military veterans.
The legislature further finds that the cost of food and fuel has increased significantly in the past year. Supply challenges and food prices affect consumers and businesses alike, and this is simultaneously affecting low-income people and the emergency food system that is intended to respond to rising need.

The legislature further finds that many of the worst impacts of high food prices and economic instability have been avoided by increased federal support for the basic food program. Recent congressional action ends additional emergency allotments to basic food after February 2023, resulting in a loss of $93 million per month in federal food assistance to Washington households living at or below the federal poverty line. Low-income households most likely to experience the largest loss of basic food benefits are seniors, people with disabilities, families with children, and single adult men.

The legislature intends to provide support to people who are most impacted by the loss of basic food, from young children to seniors. This includes providing funding to support food banks to provide emergency food supplies to families, increases in the fruit and vegetable incentive program that helps families stretch their basic food dollars further, and senior nutrition programs that provide meals to people who might otherwise go hungry.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 3. FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE—FOOD ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

General Fund—State Appropriation (FY 2023) . . . . . . $20,000,000
TOTAL APPROPRIATION. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $20,000,000

The appropriation in this section is subject to the following conditions and limitations: $20,000,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the department to provide grants to hunger relief organizations to achieve food security within the state such as the purchase of food and supplies; investment in storage capacity; management of operations, facilities, employees, and volunteers; conducting social service outreach to food recipients; or conducting any other activity that is necessary to help achieve food security for the public.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 4. FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH

General Fund—State Appropriation (FY 2023) . . . . . . $2,000,000
TOTAL APPROPRIATION. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $2,000,000

The appropriation in this section is subject to the following conditions and limitations: $2,000,000 of the general fund—state appropriation for fiscal year 2023 is provided solely for the fruit and vegetable incentives program.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 5. FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES—AGING AND ADULT SERVICES PROGRAM

General Fund—State Appropriation (FY 2023) . . . . . . . . . $6,000,000

TOTAL APPROPRIATION. . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . $6,000,000

The appropriation in this section is subject to the following conditions and limitations: The appropriation in this section is provided solely for senior nutrition services programs operated by area agencies on aging to provide nutrition services for seniors, prioritizing services for those who have been most impacted by the loss of federal resources under the supplemental nutrition assistance program that were provided during the COVID-19 pandemic. The funding may also be used for outreach activities to target the populations most impacted.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 6. If any part of this act is found to be in conflict with federal requirements that are a prescribed condition to the allocation of federal funds to the state, the conflicting part of this act is inoperative solely to the extent of the conflict and with respect to the agencies directly affected, and this finding does not affect the operation of the remainder of this act in its application to the agencies concerned. Rules adopted under this act must meet federal requirements that are a necessary condition to the receipt of federal funds by the state.

NEW SECTION. Sec. 7. This act is necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, or safety, or support of the state government and its existing public institutions, and takes effect immediately.

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