



2010 Policy Agenda

Create Pathways that Lead Families to Economic Independence

Burst for Prosperity and Children's Home Society of Washington (CHSW) support utilizing strategies that reduce poverty and help low-income families move into the middle class.

The Middle Class Expansion Fund legislation directs OFM to track and report the percentage of people living in the middle income bracket - defined as between 200% and 500% of the FPL for a family of four. The estimated total savings to the state, including the total cost reductions when families move into the middle income bracket will also be tracked. An amount equal to one half of the total savings to the state will be deposited into a middle class expansion fund. With these monies, the Workforce Training Board will work with partners to create strategies to increase the percent of people into the middle class.

Burst for Prosperity and CHSW support redesigning the TANF program.

The TANF program should be redesigned by building upon proven programs and models that help families attain family-wage jobs. Reform should include more effective and intensive support by streamlining and increasing access to services; increasing and utilizing assets to provide real opportunities for success; and creating partnerships between government and the private sector. Overall, TANF should be focused on getting more families to reach the goal of self-sufficiency.

Promote Asset Development Strategies That Help Individuals Build Wealth

Burst for Prosperity and CHSW support retaining funding for the Family Prosperity Act.

The account assists low-income families with asset building through grants, local coalitions, and technical assistance. The Governor's proposed budget has eliminated this funding. It is critical for the legislature to retain this funding for the coalitions to continue to provide asset building services to help families stay out of poverty in our state.

Burst for Prosperity and CHSW support the elimination/modification of asset limits.

Saving money and building wealth are essential for families to reach self-sufficiency - strict asset limits do not allow families to develop their own individual safety nets for long-term stability. Families who are receiving public benefits are actually penalized for saving because even modest accumulation of assets can make a family ineligible for assistance. Ridding asset limits helps families out of a crisis mindset and allows them to focus on savings for their future. Asset limits should be increased, and opportunities for low-income families to save for their future should be encouraged.

Promote Microenterprise/self-employment policy as an effective poverty reduction tool

Burst for Prosperity and CHSW support retaining funding for the Washington State Microenterprise Association (WSMA).

Self-employment is a proven effective pathway for low-income families to get out of poverty. WSMA has proven to support the capacity of microenterprise organizations in providing financial education and technical assistance, access to capital and micro-lending, and business creation support to low-income families. It is critical that the legislature retains WSMA funding to allow them to continue playing an important role in providing jobs and getting more families to economic self-sufficiency.