2021 Legislative Agenda

As we enter the 2021 legislative session amid the COVID-19 pandemic, we continue to see how the public health and economic crises have magnified existing and deeply rooted inequities across the state. The Budget & Policy Center calls on Washington state leaders to implement strategic and impactful policies that are equitable and inclusive and that prioritize resources for people with low incomes; Black, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC); and others who are most impacted by this pandemic. Every budget and policy choice lawmakers make this session is an opportunity to reimagine and build a stronger, more just future for our state.

This session, lawmakers must:

- **Provide cash assistance directly to people most impacted by the crisis.** This includes expanding existing cash assistance programs and support to individuals by:
  - Enacting a **Recovery Rebate** — an updated version of the **Working Families Tax Credit** — to put cash back into the pockets of people with low incomes, including immigrant workers who are unjustly excluded from other federal tax benefits.
  - Reducing barriers to and reinvesting in **WorkFirst/Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)**.
  - Creating an income support program for unemployed workers who are wrongly left out of unemployment insurance protections — such as undocumented workers.
  - Deepening investments in and extending the availability of critical cash assistance programs such as **Housing and Essential Needs (HEN), Aged, Blind, or Disabled (ABD)**, and the **Disaster Cash Assistance Program (DCAP)**.

- **Raise progressive revenue to invest equitably in communities.**
  - Lawmakers can address the state’s economic crisis with new taxes on Washington’s wealthiest residents and large, profitable corporations. Options for doing so include (but are not limited to):
    - Enacting a state excise tax on **capital gains**, or profits from the sale of corporate stocks and bonds, and other high-end financial assets.
    - Enacting new excise or **payroll taxes on the salaries of CEOs and other highly paid corporate employees.**
    - Extending the **estate tax** to include untaxed, multi-million-dollar inheritances by re-enacting a **state inheritance tax**.
    - Applying **higher excise tax rates to real estate deals worth more than $1.5 million**.

**Our principles to guide the state policy response to the economic crisis**

- Lead with equity.
- Provide immediate, impactful, and sustained relief.
- Make permanent fixes to underlying structural failures.
- Implement policy responses rooted in trust and dignity, not paternalism.
- Reject a scarcity mindset: There is enough wealth in our state to invest in our people.

[Read these principles in full.](#)
• Bolster investments in public services that support well-being and divest from systems that cause harm. Legislators should build a state budget that strengthens investments in communities of color, supports an equitable economic recovery, and divests from harmful systems and policies. This includes:
  o Investing in **basic and foundational needs** such as food assistance, child care, housing, education, public health, and health care – and including services for older people and people with disabilities.
  o Supporting **essential workers**, including by **funding negotiated collective bargaining agreements** for public employees.
  o **Ending the suspension of driver’s licenses** of people who cannot pay a moving violation citation, which would alleviate financial and legal stress and hardship for thousands of Washingtonians each year.
  o Supporting the self-determination of communities of color in advancing their own investment solutions, including: adopting the priorities of **Washington for Black Lives** to defund and demilitarize the police and invest in BIPOC communities; and investing in the **Communities of Concern Commission**, which is working to grow financial capital assets in Washington’s communities of color.