

Good morning, Chair Peterson and members of the committee. My name is Tracy Yeung, and I am a policy fellow at the Washington State Budget & Policy Center.

We strongly support House Bill 2009 to create a guaranteed basic income program in Washington.

We believe everyone deserves the essentials: living in safe, stable housing, having sufficient, nutritious food, and receiving medical care without worrying about the size of the bill. And we know that the pandemic and the associated economic fallout has made it much more difficult for families with low incomes to have these essentials, while the wealthiest few continue to reap enormous profits.

Providing a basic income is a simple way to help Washingtonians meet their basic needs. This idea has been proposed and advocated for decades by Black leaders including Martin Luther King Jr, the National Welfare Rights Organization, and the Black Panther Party. Basic income is a proven method of improving the well-being and health of recipients. A recent randomized-control trial of a poverty reduction program found that unconditional cash transfers positively impacted infants' brain activity, which is associated with stronger cognitive development.

This proposal builds on an important budget proviso that was approved in the 2021 state legislative session to support program-design work on a guaranteed basic income program through the Department of Social and Health Services. We applaud the work that community members have done to inform this process, and hope to work to align this legislation with the policy framework being developed through that process.

Personally, this program would have been a huge help for my family of five as I was growing up in Seattle. It would have meant being able to afford housing in a place without any pest infestations or going grocery shopping and buying food we wanted to eat instead of whatever was cheapest.

Direct cash payments to people during the pandemic has decreased poverty to its [lowest rates in 20 years](#). However, that was mostly due to one-time federal relief money. Washington state should use our money where it will have the most impact by keeping people out of poverty through a guaranteed basic income.

Thank you for this opportunity to testify.