



STATE OF WASHINGTON

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES

Post Office Box 45010, Olympia WA 98504-5010

Declaration of Supporting a Continuation of Benefits Due to COVID-19

The state of Washington continues to operate essential statewide COVID-19 public health related services to support communities, families and individuals in their efforts to remain safe and healthy.

The Washington State Department of Social and Health Services administers essential benefits and services that support the larger statewide strategic recovery plan. An essential component of family and community stability throughout the COVID-19 emergency has been increased access and amounts of food benefits for individuals and families who are on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).

National and local studies have demonstrated that people who have met the eligibility criteria and access SNAP benefits, have improved health outcomes and experience overall lowered health care costs.

The issuance of SNAP COVID-19 Emergency Allotment benefits continues to be an important part of our statewide recovery and the additional supplemental food benefits provides critical, health-related supports for vulnerable populations.

WHEREAS, the national public health emergency declared for COVID-19 by the Secretary of Health and Human Services under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act (42 U.S.C. §247d), remains in place;

WHEREAS, on August 9, 2021, the Governor Inslee issued Proclamation 21-14, requiring all state employees, higher education, childcare, and K-12 education employees, and most health and long-term care providers to be fully vaccinated;

WHEREAS, data reported by the Washington State Department of Health on September 21, 2022, shows 77% of Washington residents who are six months and older have received one dose and 58% of the population over the age of five have received a third dose of one of the original COVID-19 vaccines;

WHEREAS, while the cumulative number of reported COVID-19 cases continues to decline, one in four residents have been infected, totaling over 1.8 million reported cases through September 21, 2022, with actual case counts being anticipated as far higher;

WHEREAS, the Washington State Department of Health has reported over 14,000 COVID-19 related deaths as of September 21, 2022;

WHEREAS, data continues to demonstrate infection and hospitalization rates that those racial, ethnic, and spoken language groups in Washington state who have been historically marginalized, impacted by structural racism and other forms

of systemic oppression, are disproportionately affected by COVID-19;

WHEREAS, the seasonal surge of COVID-19 cases, the return of seasonal influenza and the limited uptake of the new bivalent COVID-19 booster vaccine combined with other external forces will continue to exert economic and financial deprecations on the population as a whole;

WHEREAS, the Omicron variant wave of last winter generated the highest monthly average cases (January 2022) and highest monthly average deaths (February 2022) of the entire pandemic, with similar outcomes possible due to the Omicron subvariants BA.5 and BA.4 along with seasonal influenza;

WHEREAS, rapid uptake of government authorized bivalent COVID-19 vaccines is anticipated as unlikely, especially in rural south, southeast, and northeast regions of Washington State, where current county vaccination rates are below 50%;

WHEREAS, private sector analysis indicates Washington State has had the 24th highest economic impact from COVID-19 based on the percentage of the state's employees in sectors with a high or medium-high level of exposure to COVID-19;

WHEREAS, the American economy has experienced two consecutive quarters of negative GDP growth (-1.6 in Quarter 1 and -0.6 in Quarter 2), meeting a widely held definition of a recession; and

WHEREAS, Washington State is experiencing a 40 year high in inflation, where cost of living is growing twice as fast as wages (current Pacific Region Consumer Price Index is at 7.6% and the Seattle Metro Consumer Price Index is at 9.0%, while wage growth from March 2021 through March 2022, was 3.8% which is well below the national average of 11.7%).

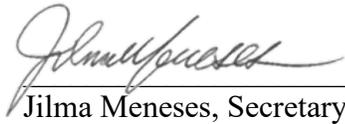
NOW, THEREFORE, I, Jilma Meneses, the Secretary of the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services, effective upon the date my signature is affixed to this document and based on my authority and obligations under [74.04.050](#) to [74.04.057](#) of the Revised Code of Washington, do hereby direct the Department to continue taking all necessary actions to address the COVID-19 pandemic throughout the State of Washington, including:

- Taking all available and necessary steps to provide financial and any other available benefit assistance to the residents of Washington State; and
- Entering into or continuing participation in any agreements, contracts, or programs of which the primary purpose is to make benefits, as well as any other assistance available to more fully address the harmful economic and health-related impacts COVID-19 is having on the residents of Washington State.

This declaration shall be effective until the termination of the federal declaration of a public health emergency.

By:

Date:



Jilma Meneses, Secretary

11/04/2022

DSHS: *Transforming Lives*