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DIRECTIVE OF THE GOVERNOR

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November 6, 2017

To: Washington State Executive and Small-Cabinet Agencies

From: Governor Jay Inslee

Subject: Work Group on Poverty Reduction

The serious consequences of living in long-term poverty include persistent, frequent and severe health problems, increased family stress and negative events, risk for homelessness, and housing instability. Living in poverty can become a self-perpetuating cycle that affects generations. A recent study from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities shows that social benefit programs have helped lift one million Washingtonians above the federal poverty line annually. (<http://www.cbpp.org/>) Importantly, poverty reduction can be an economic driver for Washington employers, by increasing consumer income, consumer demand, and the supply of skilled workers for growing economies.

Tracking Washington's poverty rate informs planning and budget development for safety net programs across the state. The Washington State poverty rate has exceeded the national rate—averaging 1.7% higher than the national level for most of the last decade. Furthermore, research from the University of Washington demonstrates that Washington families require an income well above the poverty line to make ends meet. It remains a goal of the legislative and executive branches to reduce the poverty rate in Washington.

In order to achieve this goal, I direct the Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS) to co-lead an inter-agency work group with the Department of Commerce (Commerce) and the Employment Security Department (ESD), with participation from a diverse group of experts, including people experiencing poverty, employers who are likely to hire low-income people into lasting careers, community stakeholders, and members of the Legislature. The work group will use data, research and the voice of those affected to examine the root causes of poverty in communities across the state, how poverty manifests itself in the daily lives of our citizens, the effects of inter-generational poverty and how we, as a state, can aid individuals and families in exiting poverty.

Previous efforts to reduce poverty have been through the Executive-Legislative WorkFirst Oversight Task Force (WorkFirst Task Force). The efforts of the inter-agency work group created through this directive should complement the responsibilities of the Task Force and examine poverty reduction through a broader lens beyond the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) and WorkFirst programs. The work group shall consider the following in poverty reduction: early learning education, post-secondary training and employment

opportunities, increasing economic assets within families and communities, housing, health and well-being, and social capital. In evaluating economic stability and growth, the work group should focus on areas of the state with the greatest low-income populations and slowest economic growth rates. To accomplish this work, DSHS shall establish the work group within the WorkFirst Task Force. Commerce and ESD shall co-chair this work group.

The work group shall consist of members representing DSHS, ESD, Commerce, the Health Care Authority, the Workforce Training and Coordinating Board, the Washington Student Achievement Council, the Department of Health, the Department of Early Learning, the Department of Corrections and the State Board of Community and Technical Colleges. DSHS shall seek representation of no less than six stakeholders who represent those most affected by poverty; and, in selecting those members, DSHS and the co-chairs shall consider a broad range of factors including but not limited to race, ethnicity, gender, household type, zip code, and disability status. The work group co-chairs shall request the Speaker of the House of Representatives and the President of the Senate select one member from each of the two largest caucuses within each chamber to participate in the work group. DSHS shall maintain a list of all work group members.

The work group shall:

- Establish a measurable set of goals, informed by existing state-agency analysis or peer-reviewed literature, for poverty reduction based on data-driven strategies. These goals should address situational as well as inter-generational poverty.
- Engage diverse stakeholder groups from service providers, community-based organizations, legislators, the business community, Washingtonians experiencing poverty, and subject matter experts in the validation of these goals and the development of measures and strategies for implementation of a poverty reduction plan.
- Collaborate with partner agencies on the intersections of poverty reduction efforts. Where appropriate, recommend refinement to existing programs to achieve better results of shared objectives as they relate to poverty reduction.
- Develop, by September 2018, a comprehensive 10-year poverty reduction strategy for recommendation to state agencies, legislative and executive branch leadership.
- Report, by December 2019, to the WorkFirst Task Force, Governor, and appropriate committees of the Legislature on the progress achieved towards the goals previously identified and make recommendations to state agencies, as well as the executive and legislative branches regarding program improvements to further these efforts.

I invite and encourage the Superintendent of Public Instruction, Attorney General, and Insurance Commissioner to participate in this work. The expertise of their agencies would significantly improve the state's ability to develop a comprehensive strategy to reduce poverty in Washington.

In light of the current economic growth across our state and our improved economy, now is the time to invest our resources and energy to make Washington a place where all residents and communities have the opportunity to thrive and reach their full potential. We want Washington to be a state where everyone has the opportunity to share in the prosperity enjoyed by so many.