

PROCLAMATION

WHEREAS, summer is the hungriest time of year for many children, when families struggle to make up for lost school meals and food insecurity tends to increase; and

WHEREAS, one in six kids in Washington state are food insecure, meaning their families struggle to provide regular access to adequate food, and Seattle Public Schools students who are eligible to participate in the federal free and reduced-price meal program during the school year may not know how to access adequate nutrition during the summer months; and

WHEREAS, low-income families spend an additional \$300 per month in the summer months to provide food for themselves and their children; and

WHEREAS, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated food insecurity, particularly among communities of color and households with children, which in turn led to increased financial instability, housing instability, and health issues, and its effects are still felt today; and

WHEREAS, public health data shows that Black and Hispanic/Latinx households in King County are twice as likely to experience food insecurity than White households, and Southeast Seattle households have especially high rates food insecurity; and

WHEREAS, children who are food insecure are more likely to miss school, perform poorly academically, experience social, emotional, and mental health challenges, forgo healthcare, and develop chronic diseases; and

WHEREAS, the National School Lunch Program's Seamless Summer Option and Summer Food Service Program—funded by the U.S. Department of Agriculture, administered statewide by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, and administered locally by community-based organizations, school districts, and municipalities—play a vital role in alleviating food insecurity by helping low-income children get the nutrition they need during the summer months; and

WHEREAS, the Seattle Human Services Department's Summer Food Service Program, in partnership with Seattle Parks and Recreation, United Way of King County, and other community partners, served more than 100,000 free snacks and meals at sites across Seattle in 2023, and launched 60 Free Summer Meals sites in early July that are offering young people ages 1–18 free nutritious meals now through August 23, 2024; and

WHEREAS, the SUN Bucks (Summer EBT) program provides eligible low-income families with extra dollars for groceries when school is out, which offsets food costs for families, increases access to nutritious and culturally relevant meals, reduces childhood hunger, and increases spending within the community, and is especially impactful for families when paired with Free Summer Meals; and

WHEREAS, by increasing awareness of Free Summer Meals and SUN Bucks through outreach in the community and investing in summer programming to attract more kids to meal sites, we can help to ensure that no child goes hungry this summer; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle recognizes the importance of the Summer Meal and SUN Bucks programs in ensuring no child goes hungry, exemplifying the values of our One Seattle vision in building a thriving, inclusive, and supportive community for all.

THEREFORE, I HEREBY PROCLAIM JULY 8–12, 2024 TO BE

Free Summer Meals Awareness Week in Seattle

I call upon the people of Seattle to recognize the importance of adequate nutrition for healthy physical, social, and emotional development and to let friends and neighbors who might benefit from Free Summer Meals for their children and grandchildren know food is available by texting the word “Food” to 304-304. (*Envíe un mensaje de texto con la palabra "Comida" al 304-304.*)



Mayor Bruce A. Harrell

