



Economic  
Opportunity  
Institute

## 2017 Policy Agenda

*Our mission: build an economy that works for everyone by advancing public policies that promote educational opportunity, good jobs, healthy families & workplaces, and a dignified retirement for all.*

### Priorities for Action

**Paid Family and Medical Leave:** At some point in life, everyone needs extended time away from work to care for themselves or a loved one. But without access to paid leave, Washington workers have to put the health of their families aside to keep their jobs. **Goal: Pass a statewide paid family and medical leave program that provides equitable access to time to care for a new child or when a serious health condition strikes.**

**Equal Pay:** Washington needs more economy-boosting jobs – and fewer economy-busting ones. Ensuring women are paid fairly and have equal access to career opportunities means their families can buy the basics, and helps our entire economy grow. **Goal: Pass legislation giving workers new tools to help ensure they're being paid fairly and opportunities aren't limited by old stereotypes.**

**Childcare Worker Compensation:** Washington has taken steps toward building a high-quality early childhood education (ECE) system. However, wages for people working in child care remain near poverty level. A well-compensated workforce is essential for promoting staff retention and improving quality of care. **Goal: Fund pay incentives for childcare teachers pursuing additional education or experience in the state budget.**

**Tax Reform:** It takes collective resources – that is, our taxes – to build thriving communities where everyone has an equal chance to succeed. But Washington's long-outdated tax system can't keep pace with the education and infrastructure our kids and communities need. **Goal: Pass an income tax in one or more Washington cities to fund local/community investments as a step toward fair and ample state revenue.**

### Preparation for Rapid Response

**Minimum Wage & Paid Sick Leave:** Washington voters overwhelmingly supported Initiative 1433 – raising the state's minimum wage and ensuring all workers can earn and use paid sick leave. Now the State is writing rules to implement sick leave. Meanwhile, conservative legislators are planning efforts to weaken the new law. **Goal: Partner with labor and community allies to keep Washington's labor standards strong.**

**Social Security:** Social Security provides financial security and stable incomes to more than 60 million Americans. But advocates for cuts and privatization are now working at the highest levels of

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**Building an economy that works – for everyone.**

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the federal administration and Congress. **Goal: Work with the Social Security Works – Washington coalition and allies nationwide to defend Social Security, and promote policy alternatives to protect, enhance and expand it.**

**Health Care:** The Affordable Care Act and accompanying Medicaid expansion have measurably improved people’s health and saved lives – but the results of the 2016 election jeopardize health coverage for millions of Washington residents. **Goal: Explore state-based solutions to maintain and expand health care coverage, partnering with allies to implement these measures as soon as necessary or possible.**

## **Research and Policy Development**

**Overtime Compensation:** The salary threshold for overtime pay hasn’t budged in decades. Washington can establish its own overtime rules to ensure people are compensated fairly for working longer than normal hours, implemented in a way that gives businesses adequate time to adapt. **Goal: Provide economic analysis for an improved statewide overtime pay rule.**

**Community College Access:** A growing share of job openings require at least some college – but increasing tuition puts that opportunity out of reach for too many. Increased public funding, and a system of post-graduation income-based contributions called Pay It Forward (PIF), are a better alternative. **Goals: Identify new sources of revenue to support greater college access; develop a PIF plan for Applied BA programs (third year of community college), supported by funding outside of the state budget.**

**Affordable Childcare:** Child care is in short supply and demand is high. Providers work on thin profit margins with standards for child safety and staffing ratios that can’t be compromised. As a result, it’s often a Washington family’s biggest expense after housing; for single-parent families, it can cost more. **Goal: Research and develop policy/funding plans to make quality childcare affordable and accessible for all Washington families, while boosting pay for teachers.**

**Universal Voluntary Pre-Kindergarten:** High-quality pre-K benefits all kids – improving educational equity for low-income children as well as overall student achievement. Programs can take place in a variety of settings: public schools, private non-profit and for-profit centers, and in regulated home childcare. **Goal: Research and develop policy/funding plan to make high-quality pre-K available to all Washington families.**

**Ending Mass Incarceration:** Many criminal-justice policies disproportionately and systematically target the poor and people of color for incarceration, and make getting a job or housing after a conviction difficult. **Goal: Publish research on the impact of modern criminal justice policies on individual, family and community well-being.**

**Payday Lending:** Washington residents living paycheck-to-paycheck can easily be trapped in a cycle of debt and poverty as a result of high-interest payday loans, provided by a banking industry that preys particularly on poor communities and people of color. **Goal: Ensure state consumer protections stay intact; research policies that encourage banks and credit unions to expand offerings of low-interest short term loans.**