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RESOLUTION ADDRESSING FOOD DESERTS AND EXPANDING EQUITABLE GROCERY ACCESS IN WASHINGTON STATE

WHEREAS, access to affordable, healthy, and culturally appropriate food is a basic human need and essential to the health, dignity, and economic stability of working people; and,

WHEREAS, many communities across Washington State, particularly low-income, rural, and historically marginalized urban neighborhoods, lack adequate access to full-service grocery stores, creating “food deserts” where residents must travel long distances or rely on convenience stores with limited, higher-cost, and less nutritious options; and,

WHEREAS, food deserts disproportionately impact working-class families, seniors, people with disabilities, and communities of color, exacerbating health inequities including higher rates of diet-related illnesses such as diabetes and heart disease; and,

WHEREAS, the closure of grocery stores, often driven by corporate consolidation, disinvestment, and profit-driven decision-making, results in job loss, reduced access to union jobs, and further economic decline in affected communities; and,

WHEREAS, grocery workers are essential workers who provide a critical public service, and expanding access to grocery stores must include a commitment to family-wage jobs, strong labor standards, and the right to organize; and,

WHEREAS, public policy can play a meaningful role in addressing food deserts through targeted incentives, infrastructure investment, and support for community-based and worker-centered solutions, including cooperatives and unionized grocery models; and,

WHEREAS, Washington State has the opportunity to lead in advancing innovative, equitable food access policies that strengthen both communities and the labor movement; now therefore be it,

RESOLVED, that the Washington State Labor Council, AFL-CIO (WSLC) supports efforts to eliminate food deserts across Washington State and ensure that all communities have access to affordable, healthy food; and be it further,

RESOLVED, that the WSLC will advocate for public policies that incentivize the development and retention of full-service grocery stores in underserved communities, including but not limited to:

- Grants, tax incentives, and low-interest financing for grocery store development in food deserts;
- Zoning, land-use, and infrastructure policies that support equitable food access;
- Protections and incentives to prevent the closure of existing grocery stores in vulnerable communities; and be it further,

RESOLVED, that such policies must prioritize the creation and retention of high-quality jobs, including union jobs, with fair wages, benefits, and safe working conditions, and must respect workers' rights to organize; and be it further,

RESOLVED, that the WSLC supports community-driven and worker-centered models, including cooperatively owned grocery stores and partnerships with labor organizations, as viable and sustainable solutions to address food deserts; and be it further,

RESOLVED, that the WSLC will work in coalition with community organizations, public health advocates, and policymakers to advance legislation and funding that expands equitable food access and strengthens local economies; and be it finally,

RESOLVED, that the WSLC will continue to elevate the voices of grocery workers and impacted communities in the fight to ensure that no Washingtonian is left without access to healthy, affordable food.