



For Immediate Release: September 3, 2018
Contact: Jamie Fleming, (425) 281-0166

Workers and Small Businesses Announce Support for Yes! To Affordable Groceries Campaign

*** Audio and video from event available upon request ***

Burien, WA – Before the annual Labor Day Block Party and Cookout, Union leaders, workers, and small businesses held a press conference today in support of Yes! to Affordable Groceries campaign (I-1634), which would prohibit municipalities from enacting regressive taxes on groceries.

These organizations join over 1,300 Washington small businesses, restaurants, cafes, grocers and other community organizations who are supporting I-1634, which would keep foods and beverages as affordable as possible. Leaders from MLK Labor, Teamsters 117, and Teamsters 174 discussed why they are taking a stand to bring fairness to our tax structure, protect union jobs, and prevent a new regressive tax on food and beverages which would disproportionately hurt low-income Washingtonians.

“I’m in total support of this initiative because I’m a hard-working member of society who needs to provide for a family of six,” said **Anthony McKinney, a Teamsters Local 117 member and 12-year employee of SuperValu, Inc.** “Any extra tax on something as important as food or milk would take away from other things in life such as keeping the lights on or buying clothes for my kids. It would strain an already overtaxed community who is struggling to make ends meet.”

While the Washington state government doesn’t currently collect taxes on food and beverages, there is a loophole in the law that allows local governments to impose taxes on groceries, which hits working families the hardest. The Seattle City Council was able to exploit this loophole in crafting a tax on beverages (the “Soda Tax”) in 2017. But while this tax targeted beverages, prices on other products have also increased throughout the city as business owners have attempted to implement the complicated policy.

I-1634 takes a proactive step to close this loophole and prevent any new taxes that target food, beverages and their ingredients in Washington. It does not reverse or impact the Seattle tax nor any revenue streams that have already been passed or are depended upon by local governments.

“Washington has the most regressive tax structure in the nation, and new grocery taxes would place a disproportionate tax burden on working class families,” said **Nicole Grant, Executive**

Secretary-Treasurer of MLK Labor, which represents over 100 unions and 100,000 union workers. “As unions, it’s our job to identify and support policies that are a good deal for workers. New grocery and soda taxes are not. We have to stand up and advocate for workers ability to afford to live in our communities. The beverage and grocery industry provides thousands of good union jobs in King County and all over Washington. Organizations such as the Seattle Building Trades and the International Association of Machinists Local 751 have come out in support of this initiative because they are fighting for tax fairness for the working families they represent.”

Regressive taxes have a significant impact on union members and working families across Washington. Support for I-1634 is about both protecting union jobs and about protecting members' ability to afford to live in their community.

Teamsters Joint Council 28, which represents thousands of workers in the beverage and grocery industry, was one of the co-filers of I-1634 and have been joined by seven of their locals, including Local 117 and Local 174 in endorsing this initiative.

“As labor leaders in the movement, we must defend our Members’ jobs and their work. It is our core and fundamental responsibility,” said **Pete Lamb, Senior Business Agent at Teamsters Local 174**. “There are thousands of union workers throughout the state of Washington whose jobs are directly tied to the groceries that you and I buy every day. From fresh produce to the bottled water that you drink, you can bet that union workers are directly impacted by any current or future attempts to place regressive taxes on grocery items.”

###

Paid for by [Yes! to Affordable Groceries](#), supported by the Joint Council of Teamsters No. 28, Washington Farm Bureau, Washington Food Industry Association, and Korean-American Grocer’s Association of Washington, and sponsored by the American Beverage Association. Top 5 contributors: Washington Food Industry Association; The Coca-Cola Company; PepsiCo, Inc.; Keurig Dr Pepper, and Red Bull North America. PO Box 50705, Bellevue, Washington, 98015.