



### **Diverse Statewide Coalition Unites in Support of Affordable Groceries**

*Over 360,000 signatures submitted for Initiative 1634; November Ballot Measure gives voters opportunity to halt new local taxes on everyday food and beverages*

**Seattle, July 9, 2018** – A Seattle grocer is concerned about the impact of higher prices to his neighborhood business and his customers; a Camas shop owner fears that with her high rent any additional expenses would force her to shut down; a Spokane mother of three young children is exasperated with the possibility of additional local taxes on essential items like meat, milk or eggs. These are just a few of the personal stories from hundreds of citizens and organizations from around the state that are stepping forward to offer their support for a statewide measure to prohibit new taxes on groceries.

In a conference call to launch the campaign, the Yes! To Affordable Groceries coalition announced today that more than 360,000 people signed petitions which were submitted to the Secretary of State's Office on Friday July 6<sup>th</sup> to ensure that Initiative 1634, a measure that would prevent new local taxes on groceries, qualified for the November ballot.

In today's campaign kick-off, a diverse group of coalition members including a working mother, a grocery store owner, a community activist and a local farmer shared in their own words why they support Initiative 1634. This ballot measure covers all groceries including meat, dairy, juices, everyday beverages and more, and would prohibit any new local taxes against these items.

"The cost of living is high enough already and is making things difficult for so many Washington families. We definitely can't afford new taxes on groceries," said Keilynn Manley, a sales representative from Spokane and mother of three. "Once they reach into your grocery cart, where does it end? I'm supporting measure 1634 because it provides the level of protection that my neighbors and I need to make sure that the basic necessities like meats, produce and everyday beverages remain affordable and free from additional taxes."

"Food is a real necessity and any taxes on groceries directly translates to lower sales volume for my store. It means my customers have less money to spend on the essentials and their quality of life suffers. When we're struggling to maintain sales, new taxes on groceries would really hurt, and there would be real consequences for my staff and our customers. That's why we need to take a stand now before it's too late," said Kevin Roark, owner of Bargain Giant Food in Spokane.

With initial support from the Washington Farm Bureau, the Washington Food Industry Association, the Joint Council of Teamsters No. 28 and the Korean American Grocers Association, the Yes! To Affordable Groceries coalition has grown to nearly a thousand members from cities, towns and farming

communities throughout the state. The coalition now includes organizations like the Central Washington Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, The International Association of Machinists 751, The Seattle Building Trades, Washington Cattlemen's Association, Washington Hospitality Association, Washington Retail Association, Washington Tree Fruit Association, and Washington State Dairy Federation. A full list of coalition members and endorsers is available [here](#).

"Any discussions on the issue of taxes must be guided by one clear principle – taxes on food and beverages should be off the table as politicians consider new revenue sources. We need to put a stop to any more regressive taxes that target the wallets and jobs of hardworking families, and it needs to start with food and beverages. Working families need a level of protection against unwanted and unforeseen taxes that disproportionately hurt them and I-1634 gives them that assurance," said Pete Lamb, Senior Business Agent of Teamsters Local 174.

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Bios of campaign launch participants are available [here](#).

#### Background

Yes! To Affordable Groceries is a group of citizens, businesses and community organizations actively opposing new taxes on everyday grocery items, such as meats, dairy and beverages. We're taking a stand to bring fairness to our tax structure, to protect jobs and neighborhood businesses and to prevent excessive taxation on what we eat and drink. Join us to say YES to keeping groceries affordable. For all press inquiries, please contact: [media@yestoaffordablegroceries.com](mailto:media@yestoaffordablegroceries.com).