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Fund Programs that Work: Our Hope for the Budget

OLYMPIA – Housing and homeless advocates are joining together in Olympia to call on legislators to protect the state’s safety net programs. The Washington State Senate is set to release their proposed budget, and many are expecting the worst: deep cuts to effective and innovative programs that keep our most vulnerable residents off the streets and that help many more find stable housing. Advocates are hoping the legislature will continue to fund programs that work, including:

Disability Lifeline: The Housing and Essential Needs program (HEN) and the Aged, Blind, and Disabled program (ABD) are together informally referred to as “Disability Lifeline.” These programs ensure that people who are unable to work due to a physical or mental disability can meet their basic needs. HEN provides emergency rent and utility assistance (paid directly to the landlord) and provides access to basic needs like hygiene products and bus tokens through an Essential Needs Bank. ABD provides a small cash grant to individuals who are applying for federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI). Once ABD participants transfer to SSI, the state is reimbursed for the funds spent on the ABD grant. For many people with disabilities in our state, these two programs are often the difference between housing and homelessness, between a meal and going hungry, or between a visit to the doctor and remaining sick.

Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF): Washington’s TANF program strives to improve the well-being of struggling families with children by helping them reach economic security through employment. Families with children who have incomes below 31% of the Federal Poverty Level and less than \$1,000 in assets are eligible for the program. TANF families receive a monthly cash grant to help cover the basics, such as rent, utilities, transportation, and personal health and hygiene products.

Housing Trust Fund (HTF): HTF creates affordable homes in communities across the state, addressing the full spectrum of low-income housing needs, from families leaving homelessness to low-wage workers buying a first home. Investments in HTF have created thousands of jobs and have generated millions in state and local tax revenues. To date, the Housing Trust Fund has successfully built, rehabilitated, and preserved more than 40,000 healthy and affordable homes across the state. This has kept tens of thousands of people and their children in stable housing, giving both parents and their kids an opportunity to succeed.

Washington Families Fund (WFF): Created by the Washington Legislature in 2004, WFF is a unique public-private partnership that successfully transitions homeless families and children into stable homes. WFF supports effective programs and innovative strategies addressing family homelessness at both the systems level and the families level. WFF-supported programs have served more than 1,500 homeless families—composed of 2,850 children and 1,900 adults. Of these families, 66% have moved into permanent housing.

Rapid Re-Housing (RRH): Governor Jay Inslee is proposing a new use of TANF funds to support Rapid Re-Housing (RRH) for families that are homeless. RRH will assist families who have experienced a crisis that has forced them into homelessness. In addition to housing assistance, RRH will include case management and wrap-around services to make sure that the family can quickly get back on a path towards stability.

As the economic recovery lags, these programs are more important than ever. Without critical investments in these programs, many more in our state will fall into homelessness.

We ask our legislators to ensure these safety net programs are protected and funded in our state's budget:

- Housing Trust Fund at \$175 million
- Washington Families Fund at \$6 million
- Fully fund Housing and Essential Needs/Aged, Blind, and Disabled and TANF ###