**Community members rally to support legislative action on  
affordable housing crisis and underfunded mental health services**

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**HB 2263 (Springer)**

**Local Option Public Hearing**

Providing local governments with options to strengthen their communities by providing services and facilities for people with mental illness, developmental disabilities, and other vulnerable populations, and by increasing access to educational experiences through cultural organizations.

[Bill language here.](http://lawfilesext.leg.wa.gov/biennium/2015-16/Pdf/Bills/House%20Bills/2263.pdf)

Monday, June 8, 2015 at 11:00am

House Finance Committee

Hearing Room A

John L. O'Brien Building

Capitol Campus in Olympia, WA

Advocates from all over the state will converge in Olympia on Monday, June 8 at 11am for a public hearing on newly introduced House Bill 2263. This bill will give local governments more options to address housing needs for people with mental illness, developmental disabilities, homeless families and youth, veterans, seniors, and domestic violence survivors.

As the state’s affordable housing and mental health crises have gotten worse, community leaders have been calling on legislators to respond. House members have come together to introduce HB 2263 that empowers local governments to create new resources for housing and mental health services in their communities.

[HB 2263 (Springer)](http://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?bill=2263&year=2015) expands on [SB 5463 (Hill)](http://app.leg.wa.gov/billinfo/summary.aspx?year=2015&bill=5463) by adding a component to allow counties and cities to address local affordable housing and mental health needs. Like the Senate bill, it also provides a “cultural access” component. **HB 2263 creates an option for local communities to implement a new 1/10 of 1% sales tax to fund affordable housing, mental health treatment facilities, and services.** If passed, counties are then empowered to enact this local option that would create a new funding source to serve vulnerable populations. Local implementation requires a county legislative body vote and allows for cities to implement if the county does not pass the option within two to three years depending on the size of the county.

“The legislature is in overtime as lawmakers struggle to reach agreement on how to address our states most urgent issues,” says Housing Alliance executive director Rachael Myers. “We are impressed that Representative Larry Springer and other House leaders are using this time to ensure our state does all it can to meet people’s most basic needs like housing, mental health care, and basic services that ensure people don’t become homeless when a crisis hits. We implore all state lawmakers to follow the lead of Representative Springer and his fellow bill sponsors to pass HB 2263 quickly and finalize a budget fully funding safety net services that prevent households from experiencing the brutality of homelessness.”

This local option has a precedent. It is similar to the Mental Illness and Drug Dependency tax (MIDD) implemented in 2005 [(RCW 82.14.460)](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/rcw/default.aspx?cite=82.14.460). **MIDD generated $96.6 million statewide in 2014 and has been enacted by 23 local jurisdictions including Walla Walla, Whatcom, King, and Skagit counties.**

This bill comes at a time when our communities need more resources. According to the National Low Income Housing Coalition, **Washington is too expensive for our average income renters.** The amount a household needs to earn to afford a modest rental home in this state has jumped by 10% or more from last year in Franklin, Benton, Pacific, Clallam (11%), San Juan (14%), Snohomish (26%), and King (26%) Counties.

Thought leaders across Washington recognize the strong link between the lack of affordable homes and other critical issues facing our communities, including chronic homelessness, health disparities that burden low-income households, and gaps in educational attainment that follow students who experience homelessness and housing insecurity. Many calling for the immediate passage of HB 2263 will testify on Monday, with many others planning to attend the hearing in-person.

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**Community leaders calling for passage of HB 2263 include:**

**Sonya Campion, Campion Advocacy Fund**

Access to safe, affordable housing is a serious issue in our state. I am happy to see a proposal that allows communities to invest in providing homes for the most vulnerable people in our neighborhoods—youth, families, veterans, the elderly, and disabled. This is an important first step to ensuring that everyone has a safe place to call home.

**Joe Cunningham, King County Family Coalition, Arc of King County**

The amount and availability of affordable housing for people with developmental disabilities is woefully inadequate, and the amount spent is far short of what's needed. This comes at a time when the needs for housing for individuals with developmental disabilities are at an all-time high. This bill would provide local communities with a much-needed tool for addressing the shortage.

**Dr. Darin Neven, Spokane Hot Spotters Community Action Group Medical Director & Emergency Physician**

Housing is one of the most effective treatments available in medicine. Unfortunately, doctors cannot write a prescription for housing. This legislation will create the opportunity for counties to fund housing for the vulnerable homeless patients that need a housing prescription filled.

**Michael Ramos, Church Council of Greater Seattle**

Generating proactive and creative options to fund mental health and homelessness services is an imperative for our state at this time. A local sales tax option will help to address the urgent need for more programs and services for our fellow neighbors who are very low-income and very vulnerable.

**David Webster, Department of Early Learning & Family Services, Opportunity Council, Whatcom County**

Washington has made significant investment in early learning and is poised to deepen its commitment. I wholeheartedly support that wise investment. That said, there are no issues that undermine my staff’s good work with young children more than homelessness, frequent household moves to cope with housing affordability, and family mental health issues. Children are simply hard-pressed to learn and develop in a healthy fashion under the oppressive weight of homelessness and family mental illness. HB 2263 will provide the tools for communities to address these potent barriers to healthy child development and learning. It seems a wise insurance policy for our state as it deepens its resolve to see all children off to a good start.

*You can see a list of official HB 2263 endorsers on the next page.* ###

**HB 2263 Organization Endorsers**

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| * All Saints Community Services - Puyallup * Ally Community Development - Seattle * The Arc of Spokane Home Ownership Opportunities Program - Spokane * Association of Washington Housing Authorities - Spokane * Beacon Communities - Tacoma * Beacon Development - Seattle * Bellingham Housing Authority - Bellingham * Blue Mountain Action Council - Walla Walla * Building Changes - Seattle * Campion Advocacy Fund - Seattle * Capitol Hill Housing Foundation - Seattle * Catholic Charities Housing Services - Yakima * Church Council of Greater Seattle - Seattle * Community Action Council of Lewis, Mason & Thurston Counties - Lacey * Community Frameworks - Spokane * Compass Housing Alliance - Seattle * Council for the Homeless - Vancouver * CUE Services, LLC - Vancouver * DESC - Seattle * El Centro de la Raza - Seattle * Emergency Support Shelter - Longview * Enterprise Community Partners - Seattle * Faith Action Network - Seattle * Friends Committee on Washington Public Policy - Olympia * Food Lifeline - Western Washington * Futurewise - Washington * Homes First! - Lacey - Olympia * Homestead Community Land Trust - Seattle * Housing Authority of Grant County - Moses Lake * Housing Consortium of Everett & Snohomish County - Everett * Housing Authority City of Kennewick - Kennewick * Housing Authority of Grant County - Grant County * Housing Development Consortium of Seattle/King County - Seattle * Housing Resources Bainbridge - Bainbridge Island * Imagine Housing - East King County * Impact Capital - Seattle * Inland Empire Residential Resources - Spokane * The Illumination Project - Seattle * Interfaith Task Force on Homelessness - Bellevue * Key Property Services, Inc. - Vancouver * King County Coalition Against Domestic Violence - King County * King County Housing Authority - King County * Longview Housing Authority - Longview * Lopez Community Land Trust - Lopez Island * Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) - Seattle | * Member of Peninsula Poverty Response - Pacific County * Mercy Housing Northwest - Seattle * Multi-Service Center - Federal Way * National Association of Social Workers - Washington Chapter * Next Step Housing - Yakima * Northwest Council of Jewish Women - Seattle * Partners for Our Children - Seattle * Okanogan County Community Action Council (OCCAC) - Okanogan * Okanogan County Housing Authority - Okanogan County * Olympic Community Action Programs - Port Townsend * Opportunity Council - Bellingham * Pacific County Housing Authority - South Bend * Parkview Services - Shoreline * Peninsula Poverty Response - Ocean Park * REACH - Vancouver * Real Change - Seattle * Rebuilding Together South Sound - Tacoma * Renton Housing Authority - Renton * Rural Community Assistance Corp * SAGE Architectural Alliance - Seattle * San Juan Community Home Trust - Friday Harbor * SEIU 775 - Seattle * SEIU Healthcare 1199NW - Seattle * Seattle Housing Authority - Seattle * Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness - Seattle * Share - Vancouver * Shelter Resources, Inc. - Bellevue * SMR Architects - Seattle * Solid Ground Washington - Seattle * Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium - Spokane * Statewide Poverty Action Network - Seattle * Tacoma/Pierce County Affordable Housing Consortium - Tacoma * TONKIN Architecture - Seattle * Triumph Treatment Services - Yakima * United Methodist Church, Seattle District - Seattle * Valley Cities - Auburn * Volunteers of America - Spokane * Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence - Olympia * Washington State Community Action Partnership - Olympia * Washington State Hospital Association - Seattle * Washington Low Income Housing Alliance - Seattle |