

**Everyone should have the opportunity to live in a safe,  
healthy, affordable home.**



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## 2017 WASHINGTON STATE AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PRIORITIES

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### Create Affordable Homes

**Build and preserve 5,700 safe, healthy, and affordable homes. Invest \$200 million in the Housing Trust Fund.**

The Housing Trust Fund creates affordable homes that help fill the gap between what low-income households can afford and what is available on the private market. The Housing Trust Fund provides homes for families, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, farmworkers, and more. Two thirds of households in homes created by the Housing Trust Fund are extremely low-income and approximately ten percent of homes have helped low-income families become first time homebuyers.

### Protect Services that Prevent and End Homelessness

**Eliminate the sunset on document recording fees that fund homelessness services, increase the fee, and eliminate the mandate to use 45% for vouchers in the for-profit housing market.**

A modest fee paid to file real estate related documents provides the most significant source of funds to combat homelessness in Washington. The fees support domestic violence shelters, youth shelters, outreach services, short- and long-term rental assistance, move-in assistance, permanent supportive housing services, and more. Unless current law is changed, a portion of the fee will sunset and more than 60% of the state homelessness funds will vanish.

### Ban Discrimination Based on a Renter's Source of Income

**Eliminate barriers to housing for renters relying on housing subsidies or income assistance to help pay the rent.**

In most places in Washington, landlords are allowed to deny applications from tenants simply for using these methods of payment. This limits mobility for low-income households and can be a legal loophole for racial discrimination or discrimination against members of other protected classes. Several cities and counties already prohibit this practice. That prohibition should be extended statewide.

## Protect Washington's Lifeline for Elderly and Disabled Adults

### **Fully fund life-saving services that prevent homelessness.**

- The **Housing and Essential Needs** (HEN) Program provides housing support to ensure a temporary disability does not result in homelessness for very low-income adults, and ensures access to essential basic needs, including transportation assistance and health and hygiene products.
- The **Aged, Blind and Disabled** (ABD) Program helps extremely low-income adults with permanent mental illnesses or permanent physical disabilities by providing cash assistance of up to \$197 per month while they apply to the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program.
- **Medical Care Services** (MCS) provide health coverage for immigrants who are disabled and elderly and who have legally verified immigration status.
- **SSI Facilitation Services** help disabled individuals through the process of applying for SSI benefits, which can be lengthy and complicated.

## Medicaid Transformation Demonstration

### **Expand housing for people with disabilities experiencing long-term homelessness by ensuring full Operating Budget authority for our state's Medicaid Transformation Demonstration.**

The federal government recently approved the state's request to use federal Medicaid resources to pay for tenancy support services delivered in permanent supportive housing. This will increase access to housing for people who have a disability, mental illness, or who are experiencing chronic homelessness. The Operating Budget should provide full authority to implement this benefit.

## Support Issues

In addition to our lead priorities, every year we identify other issues that we take positions on. Some are issues that our members or allies lead that directly impact affordable housing and related services. Others are not as directly related to affordable homes, but impact the lives of people who live in affordable homes, struggle to keep a roof over their heads, or are experiencing homelessness. People don't live their lives in silos and while we believe that a home is the *basic foundation* that everyone needs, it is not *all* that anyone needs.

This year, we have prioritized issue areas, instead of specific legislation so we can respond to the increased attention to affordable housing and homelessness issues. We expect to see more proposals than ever aimed at solving the housing crisis that exists across Washington. We also expect to see proposals based in stereotypes and prejudice that will harm our community and that we will oppose forcefully.

Every issue below impacts our ability to create safe and inclusive communities, which allow all families and individuals to thrive in safe, healthy, affordable homes.

To track our position on key bills visit [wliha.org/bill-and-budget-tracker](http://wliha.org/bill-and-budget-tracker)

*\*The following issue areas are in no particular order.*

### Clean up the tax code

Creating affordable homes and inclusive communities requires investment. We strongly support cleaning up our tax code and eliminating tax breaks to free up resources for investments that benefit all of us.

### Advance Social Justice

#### **Immigrant Rights:**

The Legislature should protect the rights of immigrants and refugees because attacks make these communities more vulnerable to homelessness and to substandard housing conditions. We oppose any attempt to weaken protections or to prevent immigrants and refugees from qualifying for state services.

#### **Fair Housing:**

The Legislature should protect and expand fair housing protections, including by investing more deeply in fair housing enforcement. We oppose any attempt to weaken fair housing protections, including for transgender people as seen in recent legislative sessions.

#### **Criminalization of Homelessness:**

The Legislature should do more to protect people experiencing homelessness. We oppose any attempt to criminalize homelessness such as arresting people for sleeping outdoors or for otherwise trying to survive without housing.

## Support Issues Continued

### **Democracy and Voting Rights:**

The Legislature should protect and expand the rights of Washington's voters and do more to encourage voter engagement. When low-income people and other marginalized communities engage in the democratic process, lawmakers gain a better understanding of the needs of all their constituents and enact better policy.

### **Criminal Records:**

The Legislature should eliminate barriers to housing, employment, and services for people with criminal records. Criminal records disproportionately impact communities of color and low-income people due to sentencing and policing biases, while also foreclosing opportunities long after formal sentences have been served.

### **Racial Justice:**

The Legislature should enact policies that increase racial and social equity and ensure that policies under consideration do not have negative impacts on marginalized groups, including communities of color, immigrants and refugees, and Muslims.

## Build and Preserve Affordable Homes

### **Local Options:**

The Legislature should expand and protect local government options to fund affordable homes, homelessness and safety-net services, and to protect the rights of tenants and homeowners.

### **Incentivize Affordable Homes:**

The Legislature should expand incentives for nonprofits, local governments, and for-profit housing developers to create affordable homes. We support incentives that do not outweigh public gain and that do not compromise tenant protections.

### **Preserve Affordable Homes:**

The Legislature should help preserve affordable homes owned by nonprofit or public entities, by investing in the aging Housing Trust Fund portfolio, ensuring sufficient operations and maintenance funds for affordable housing, and preventing unexpected new costs for affordable housing developers.

### **Homeownership:**

The Legislature should support programs that assist low-income first-time homebuyers, such as the Housing Trust Fund or other programs. We oppose attempts to weaken homeowner protections, especially against foreclosure.

## Support Issues Continued

### **Manufactured Housing Communities:**

The Legislature should preserve manufactured housing communities and protect the rights of homeowners and renters in these communities. We oppose attempts to weaken standing protections.

### **Rural Washington:**

The Legislature should act on the unique housing needs of rural Washington, including the need for preservation of existing affordable homes and deeper investments in a wide variety of affordable housing, including homes for farmworkers. We also urge the legislature to help address the repair and weatherization needs of low-income rural homeowners.

## Prevent Homelessness and Meet the Needs of Vulnerable Populations

### **Homeless Youth and Young Adults:**

The Legislature should invest in the needs of homeless youth and young adults by ensuring that no youth exits a state system of care into homelessness, expand services to meet housing and other needs for youth and their families, and strengthen the role that public schools play in identifying and meeting the unique educational needs of students impacted by homelessness and housing insecurity.

### **Domestic Violence:**

The Legislature should do more to protect children and adults from domestic violence and to connect survivors to housing and other opportunities.

### **Support People with Developmental Disabilities:**

The Legislature should protect and invest in the needs of people with developmental disabilities and their families.

### **Caring for Washington's Seniors:**

The Legislature should protect Washington's seniors, including by investing in accessible affordable senior housing.

### **Appropriate Care for People Living with Mental Illness:**

The Legislature should protect people living with mental illness and create community-based solutions, including Permanent Supportive Housing, to avoid unnecessary time in institutions.

### **Tenants' Rights:**

The Legislature should protect and expand the rights of Washington's tenants to reduce barriers to housing for renters. We oppose efforts to weaken standing protections or to preempt local governments from enacting protections.

## Support Issues Continued

### **Mental Health and Chemical Dependency Services:**

The Legislature should recognize the impact of mental illness and chemical dependency on homelessness and invest more deeply in mental health and chemical dependency services.

### **TANF, WorkFirst, Food Assistance and Safety-Net Services:**

The Legislature should protect the TANF program and restore the cash grant to pre-recession levels. We urge the legislature to protect and invest in other safety-net services and anti-poverty programs including food assistance, WorkFirst, and other strategies to address intergenerational poverty.

### **Child Welfare:**

The Legislature should do more to support families experiencing challenges that could lead, or have led them, into the child welfare system, including consolidating services into a single state agency dedicated to children, youth, and families.

*Track our advocacy on social media: #WAhomes*