



Washington Low Income Housing Alliance 2018 State Legislative Agenda Messaging Guide

Start by framing your message with a value, a problem, and a solution:

Value "Everyone should have the opportunity to live in a safe, healthy, affordable home..." (This helps establish common ground, as almost everyone believes in opportunity.)

Problem "...But in Washington, more than 39,600 public school children were found to be homeless or close to homelessness in the 2015 - 2016 school year. And every month, many households are grappling with the impossible choice of paying for a roof over their heads or paying for other basic needs like food, medicine, or childcare" (This is a great place to add local data or a personal story.)

Solution "The Housing Trust Fund is critical to solve our community's affordable housing crisis. It builds safe, healthy, and affordable homes for seniors, veterans, youth, people with disabilities and mental illness, families, and other struggling households. Please support an investment of at least \$106 million and pass the Capital Budget."

Secure significant funding for the Housing Trust Fund.

Legislative Ask: Pass a Capital Budget with at least \$106.37 million for affordable housing, and increase biennial funding with a supplemental Capital Budget.

- *The Housing Trust Fund is critical in solving our community's affordable housing struggles. It builds safe, healthy, and affordable homes for seniors, veterans, youth, people with disabilities and mental illness, families, and other struggling households.*
- *The Housing Trust Fund is the most important investment that Washington makes to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a safe, healthy, affordable home.*
- *\$106 million from the Housing Trust Fund will build or preserve at least 3,066 safe, healthy and permanently affordable homes across Washington State.*

Endorse the Housing Alliance's 2018 legislative agenda at: bit.ly/2018priorities

Questions? Contact Michele@wliha.org or Kateb@wliha.org

Protect and increase funding for programs that prevent and end homelessness.

Legislative Ask: Pass Engrossed Substitute House Bill (ESHB) 1570, the Washington Housing Opportunities Act sponsored by Rep. Macri, to eliminate the sunset on over 60% of state homelessness funds, increase the Homeless Housing Assistance Surcharge to raise resources to provide additional rental assistance and services for people experiencing homelessness, and fix the 45% mandate restricting the effectiveness of homelessness assistance. *Note that the sunset is now scheduled for June 30, 2023.

- *ESHB 1570 will prevent the looming cliff in state homelessness funds by eliminating the sunset once and for all, ensuring stability for this critical resource that saves over 98,000 households from homelessness each year. Because of the interventions funded by the surcharge, homelessness in our state decreased by 17.7% between 2006 and 2016.*
- *Stability in resources to reduce and end homelessness allows our families, our communities and our service providers to plan for the future, instead of planning for cuts. If the \$30 portion of the homeless surcharge sunsets, then at least 34,000 additional people will experience homelessness each biennial budget year.*
- *Washington has one of the hottest real estate markets in the country. Home values in Washington have gone up 10.3% over the past year. And, the median rent in Washington is now \$1,795. This lack of affordability is a central driver of the increase in homelessness. It signals a growing divide between those who have homes and those who are left in the cold. A surcharge on the purchase of a new home is a commonsense and fair way to equalize the impact of real estate activity to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to live in a safe, health and affordable home.*
- *At its current level, the Homeless Housing Assistance Surcharge represents just 1/64th of 1% of the overall price of the median priced home in our state (\$309,000). If counties choose to increase it up to the full \$50, the fee will represent just 1/31st of 1% of the overall price of the median valued home.*

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Outlaw discrimination against renters based on use of rental or income assistance.

Legislative Ask: Pass House Bill (HB) 1633 sponsored by Rep. Riccelli or Senate Bill (SB) 5407 sponsored by Sen. Frockt to make it illegal to categorically deny housing to renters using rental or income assistance.

- *Housing discrimination based on source of income is a loophole in Washington's fair housing laws that significantly limits housing options for people of color, single-parent headed households, seniors, veterans, and people with disabilities.*
- *Stereotypes and stigmas against low-income tenants create unfair barriers to housing that significantly impair the role of the private for-profit rental market in preventing and ending homelessness.*
- *Outlawing discrimination will give low-income households equal opportunity to compete for rental housing, ensuring a more diverse and equitable community.*

Ensure people with disabilities who are experiencing chronic homelessness can access permanent supportive housing, and health and social services.

Legislative Ask: Ensure full Operating Budget authority for the supportive housing services Medicaid benefit in the state's Medicaid Transformation Demonstration.

- *Permanent supportive housing is an evidence based housing and services model that connects people with disabilities who are experiencing chronic homelessness to affordable housing and to health services.*
- *Permanent supportive housing has been proven to result in a significant return on investment that is often greater than the cost of providing housing and supportive services. These cost savings come from reduced utilization of emergency health services, avoidable hospitalizations, reduced involvement with the criminal justice system, and a reduced utilization of local emergency response.*
- *The Medicaid Transformation Demonstration is an opportunity for Washington to benefit from federal investments in homelessness which are increasingly scarce, and these investments will transform lives while saving the state money.*

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Protect state rental & income assistance for disabled, elderly, low-income adults: Housing and Essential Needs program, Aged, Blind, and Disabled income assistance, and SSI Facilitation Services.

Legislative Asks:

1. Pass HB 1239/Sullivan to increase access to medical records for people applying to federal SSI benefits.
 2. Pass HB 1831/Pettigrew or SB 5609/Darneille. Both bills revise resource restrictions for public assistance programs.
- *The Housing and Essential Need and Aged Blind (HEN) and Disabled (ABD) programs are an important part of our state's mental health housing safety net. For example, 74.7% of the people who receive ABD assistance and 80.7% of the people who are referred to HEN have a mental illness.*
 - *The federal government reimburses Washington for the full cost of the Aged, Blind, and Disabled (ABD) cash grant when people successfully transition to the federal SSI program. HB 1239 is important because it will help people with permanent disabilities access a higher level of support (\$735/month), and it will help the state leverage federal resources to cover the cost of providing the ABD grant.*
 - *HB 1831 and SB 5609 will help people who are living on very low incomes access housing and meet their basic survival needs by changing program requirements to allow people to keep more of their resources. Currently, program rules limit a person's resources to \$1,000 and a car worth \$5,000 or less. No one should have to choose between experiencing homelessness or selling a car they depend on to get to work or take their children to school. These bills help more people access housing and assistance programs while also allowing people to keep more of their resources, so they are better able to reach economic security.*

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