

Building the movement to ensure that everyone in Washington has the opportunity to live in a safe, healthy, affordable home.



2018 Washington State Affordable Housing and Homelessness Legislative Priorities

Create Affordable Homes

Build and preserve safe, healthy, and affordable homes. Invest at least \$106 million in the Housing Trust Fund.

The Housing Trust Fund provides homes for families with children, seniors, veterans, people with disabilities, farmworkers, and more. It helps families with low incomes become first time homebuyers, and it builds and preserves rental homes in every county in Washington. The Housing Trust Fund is an important part of the solution to homelessness.

Ban Discrimination Based on a Renter's Source of Income

Close a fair housing loophole that allows landlords to discriminate against tenants who use rental assistance by passing HB 2578 or SB 5407.

In most places in Washington, landlords are allowed to categorically deny applications from tenants simply because they use housing subsidies or income supports to help pay the rent. This limits options for people living on low incomes, and can be a legal loophole for racial and other forms of illegal discrimination. Several cities and counties in Washington already prohibit this practice. Protection against discrimination should be extended statewide.

Secure and Increase Funding for Programs that Prevent and End Homelessness

Rising housing costs are driving increases in homelessness all along the west coast. Our investments are not keeping up. Washington must meet this growing need by passing HB 1570.

A modest fee paid to file real estate related documents is the most important source of funds to combat homelessness in Washington. This fee supports domestic violence shelters, youth and young adult services, outreach services, rental assistance, permanent supportive housing services, and more. Local communities can use these funds most effectively when they have flexibility to meet local needs. Current law mandates that 45% of funds be used in the for-profit rental market only, even though private landlords can refuse to accept this form of rental payment. Additionally, more than 60% of the fee is scheduled to expire in 2023, and if that happens, over 37,000 people could be pushed into homelessness.

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Protect Washington's Lifeline for Seniors and People with Disabilities

Fully fund life-saving services that prevent homelessness and help people meet their basic survival needs. Pass HB 1239 to help people applying for federal benefits. Pass HB 1831 or SB 5609 to help people living on very low incomes access housing and income assistance. Pass HB 2667 to improve housing stability for seniors and people with disabilities.

- **The Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) Program** provides housing support to ensure a temporary disability does not result in homelessness for adults with very low incomes. It provides access to essential basic needs, including health and hygiene products.
- **The Aged, Blind, and Disabled (ABD) Program** helps seniors and people with permanent disabilities who are living on very low incomes meet their survival needs by providing cash assistance of up to \$197 per month while they apply for federal assistance.
- **Medical Care Services (MCS)** provide health coverage for immigrants who are disabled or are over the age of 65.
- **Supplemental Security Income (SSI) Facilitation Services** help people with disabilities navigate the process of applying for federal SSI benefits, which can be lengthy and complicated. Once people successfully transition from the ABD program to the federal SSI program, the state is reimbursed for the full cost of providing ABD assistance.

Ensure People with Disabilities Experiencing Chronic Homelessness Can Access Permanent Supportive Housing, Health, and Social Services

Allow full Operating Budget authority for the supportive housing services Medicaid benefit included in the state's Medicaid Transformation Demonstration.

The federal government recently approved the state's request to use federal Medicaid resources to pay for targeted tenancy support services delivered in permanent supportive housing. This will increase access to housing for people who live with a disability and who are experiencing long-term homelessness. The Operating Budget should provide full authority to implement this benefit.

Learn more about each of these policy priorities at wliha.org/advocacy/state