

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

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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.

We prioritize issue areas 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

*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.

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Support Issues Continued

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.

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.

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Support Issues Continued

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.

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.

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Support Issues Continued

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.

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.