



# STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

## Support Priorities

The **Washington Low Income Housing Alliance** 2014 State Legislative Agenda contains support items, which are legislation and policy that our members and partner organizations lead on and that we also support. Our support priorities for 2014 are included below.

These are in no particular order.

### **The Homeless Children Education Act**

Improve educational outcomes for Washington's homeless students.

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The Homeless Children Education Act would improve data collection on the educational outcomes of students experiencing homelessness and provide teachers and school staff with improved training to help them identify and serve homeless students in school. Improved data collection will help schools, community organizations, and policy leaders target effective solutions to help homeless students succeed in school. Improved training will help teachers and staff bring homeless students out of the shadows and provide these young people with the stability and support that will help them graduate.

**Lead Organization:** UW School of Law Children & Youth Legislative Advocacy Clinic (CAYLAC), [homelesschildreducationact.com](http://homelesschildreducationact.com)

### **Protect Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF)**

Ensure this lifeline continues for low-income families who rely on this important program.

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TANF is a critical lifeline for vulnerable families across the state. But in 2011, Washington State enacted some of the deepest cuts to the program in recent history, cuts that led to more than 17,000 children across our state losing benefits and a reduction in the benefit for those remaining on the program. We support our partners' goals of restoring the grants and implementing other improvements to make TANF work better for Washington's families.

**Lead Organization:** Statewide Poverty Action Network, [povertyaction.org/basic-needs](http://povertyaction.org/basic-needs)

### **Extended Foster Care: Protect youth aging out of foster care**

Expand EFC to include the final two categories: part-time employed and those with serious medical conditions.

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The Extended Foster Care Program allows youth to remain in the foster care system until the age of 21 in order to achieve a high school diploma/GED, pursue their post-secondary education, or pursue programs that break down barriers to employment. However, there are still two categories of young people not yet covered by this program: youth working 80 hours per month or more and youth with a documented medical condition. Passing this legislation will ensure all youth aging out of care will have the opportunity to maintain safe housing until age 21.

**Lead Organization:** The Mockingbird Society, [mockingbirdsociety.org](http://mockingbirdsociety.org)

### **Protect the Foreclosure Fairness Act**

Making fixes to the FFA will allow the Foreclosure Fairness Program to build upon past successes.

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Washington State's 2011 Foreclosure Fairness Act created the Foreclosure Fairness Program. Prior to initiating foreclosure, mortgage lenders must notify borrowers that free foreclosure counseling is available. Administered by the Department of Commerce, the program offers free housing counseling, civil legal aid, education and outreach, and the opportunity for mediation. It addresses the rise in foreclosures by improving communication between lenders and homeowners to avoid foreclosure when possible. The program has been quite successful, and areas exist that the legislature can improve upon.

**Lead Organization:** Columbia Legal Services, [columbialegal.org](http://columbialegal.org)

### **Align the state and federal definitions of service animals**

Changing the state definition to match the federal will end confusion and help disabled Washington tenants.

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The federal Fair Housing Act protects the right of a person with a disability to have a therapy animal in their home, but the Washington State Law Against Discrimination only protects this right when the animal is specifically a dog or miniature horse and is trained to perform a task. This bill would ensure that Washington State law and federal law are aligned with respect to animals that assist persons with disabilities for purposes of reasonable accommodations in housing.

**Lead Organization:** Washington State Human Rights Commission, [hum.wa.gov](http://hum.wa.gov)

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