

September 23, 2014

The Honorable Jay Inslee  
Office of the Governor  
PO Box 40002  
Olympia, WA 98504-0002

Dear Governor Inslee,

We, the undersigned organizations, have come together to urge you and the Washington State Legislature to protect three crucial lifeline programs: the Housing and Essential Needs Program, the Aged, Blind and Disabled Program, and SSI Facilitation Services. The Department of Social and Health Services and Department of Commerce have proposed cuts that would, by their own figures, eliminate housing assistance each month for 580 extremely low-income, incapacitated people with disabilities, and eliminate the only source of income for 23,449 others on July 1, 2015. These programs literally mean the difference between living in a home or on the street.

**The Housing and Essential Needs (HEN)** program ensures that people with temporary mental health or physical disabilities can meet their basic needs and access stable housing when facing extreme economic hardship. Recipients are also able to access essential basic needs, including transportation assistance and health/hygiene items, until they have recovered from their disability. The program has assisted over 16,801 disabled adults with incomes below 35% of the federal poverty level since it was implemented in November 2011.

- **Agency Proposed Cut:** the Department of Commerce's decision package recommends a 13% cut (\$7.4 million dollars) to the Housing and Essential Needs program. We oppose this cut.

**The Aged, Blind, and Disabled (ABD)** program provides over 23,000 extremely low-income adults who have a permanent mental health or physical disability with \$197 monthly cash-assistance while they are applying to the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. When people transition to SSI, which can be a grueling multi-year application process, the state is retroactively reimbursed by the federal government for the full cost of the ABD cash grant. This program also provides support to a small number of extremely low-income elderly and disabled immigrants.

- **Agency Proposed Cut:** the Department of Social and Health Service's (DSHS) decision package eliminates the Aged, Blind and Disabled Program. We oppose this elimination.
- **Agency Proposed Policy Change:** DSHS proposes a policy change to the HEN program to make people with permanent disabilities (the current ABD population) eligible for HEN housing assistance. DSHS also proposes to transfer approximately one-third of their ABD budget to the Department of Commerce. This, combined with Commerce's proposed cuts to HEN, would result in a net gain of approximately 13% to HEN, but a caseload increase of four times. This policy change and budget transfer will not allow HEN to serve all of the ABD population in need of housing assistance.

**The SSI Facilitation Services** help permanently disabled adults navigate the complicated, and often long and discouraging, federal SSI application process. The proposed elimination of this program would leave very low income, disabled adults to fend for themselves and puts them at very high risk of never receiving the disability payment that they are entitled to, and which is a lifeline that prevents homelessness.

- **Agency Proposed Cut:** DSHS proposes to eliminate this program. We oppose this cut.

**Each of these cuts will increase homelessness across Washington.** The state's 2014 Point in Time Count identified 18,839 people living outside unsheltered or in temporary homeless shelters—a 6% increase from 2013. Additionally, these proposed cuts come at a time when poverty is rising: A new report by the Washington Budget and Policy Center shares that one in seven people (14.1%) in our state are already struggling below the poverty line. This is up from 13.5% in 2012. It is particularly important to protect our state's safety net programs at a time when poverty and homelessness are increasing.

Governor Inslee, we the undersigned organizations urge you and the Washington State Legislature to protect these programs and to not implement the agency proposed cuts to HEN, ABD, and SSI Facilitation.

Washington Low Income Housing Alliance, joined by:

Asian-Pacific Islander Coalition

Association of Washington Housing Authorities

Behavioral Health & Wellness (TM)

Bremerton Foodline

Building Changes

Catholic Charities Housing Services

Catholic Community Services Benedict House of Kitsap County

Catholic Community Services of Western Washington

Chelan-Douglas Community Action Council

Church Council of Greater Seattle

City of Spokane

Clallam County Shelter Providers Network

Columbia Legal Services

Committee to End Homelessness, King County

Commonwealth Agency, Inc.

Community Action Center

Community Action Council of Lewis, Mason & Thurston Counties

Community Action of Skagit County

Community Frameworks

Community Youth Services

Consejo Counseling & Referral Service

Council for the Homeless

Council on American-Islamic Relations of Washington State

DESC

El Centro de la Raza

Faith Action Network

Food Lifeline

HAD Ministries

Helpline House

Homes First!

Homestead Community Land Trust

Homeward Bound CLT

Housing Authority of Grant County

Housing Authority of Thurston County

Housing Consortium of Everett & Snohomish County

Housing Development Consortium of Seattle-King County

Housing Kitsap

Jewish Coalition for Justice  
Jewish Family Services  
Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle  
Jubilee Women's Center  
Kitsap Community Resources  
Kitsap Legal Service  
Lewis County Shelter Program  
Low Income Housing Institute  
Lower Columbia CAP  
Lower Valley Crisis and Support Services  
Mercy Housing Northwest  
NAMI Greater Seattle  
National Alliance on Mental Illness of Washington  
National Association of Social Workers — Washington Chapter  
Next Step Housing  
Northwest Community Action Center of Toppenish  
Northwest Harvest  
Opportunities Industrialization Center of Washington  
Opportunity Council  
Plymouth Housing Group  
Real Change  
Salem Arms Community Housing  
Schroeter Goldmark and Bender law firm  
Seattle Community Law Center  
Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness  
Serenity House of Clallam County  
Share  
Skagit Friendship House  
SNAP  
Solid Ground  
Solutions4community  
Spokane Housing Ventures  
Spokane Low Income Housing Consortium  
Statewide Poverty Action Network  
Sunrise Outreach Center  
Teen Feed  
The Salvation Army, Northwest Division  
United Way of King County  
Volunteers of America of Eastern Washington & Northern Idaho  
Washington State Association of County Human Services  
Washington State Catholic Conference  
Washington State Community Action Partnership  
Welfare Advocates Group  
Yakima County Human Services