

Dear Governor Inslee,

Thank you for your steadfast leadership during this crisis. We are proud to have a Governor who has taken strong steps to protect the health and safety of everyone in Washington. At the same time, there is more to do to ensure that no one loses their home during the pandemic and to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in our state. The disproportionate impact of COVID-19 on communities of color will be made even worse if more is not done to address housing and shelter needs across the state. We know this because housing insecurity and homelessness already disproportionately impact communities of color and because the vast majority of households of color in Washington are renters.

Please ensure that new and existing COVID resources reach the individuals and communities who are disproportionality impacted by homelessness and housing instability, especially communities of color, people with disabilities, and undocumented people. This requires targeted outreach, providing information in multiple languages, and working with community-based organizations. State resources should be designed and distributed with intention to reduce racial disparity and other inequities.

The undersigned organizations urge you to take the following actions:

1. Extend the existing eviction moratorium for an additional 90 days. Advocates are calling for a nationwide, uniform moratorium on evictions and foreclosures. Until that happens, the state must ensure that no one loses their home because they can't pay rent during this global pandemic and that no one is forced to move due to rent increases.
2. Use incentives or requirements to receive state funding to ensure that cities follow CDC guidance by allowing people who are unsheltered or living in encampments to remain where they are if individual housing options are not available.
3. Swiftly invest currently available CARES Act funds into rental assistance and foreclosure prevention.
4. Use the power of your office to call on Congress to provide the additional housing and homelessness assistance funds that our state needs. Thousands of Washington residents are still living unsheltered and Washington has lost significant shelter capacity as congregate shelters have enacted social distancing protocols and volunteer run shelters have closed. Rental assistance for everyone who needs it through June of next year could cost as much as \$3 billion. We can't meet these needs without federal support. Please convey to our delegation and U.S. House and Senate leadership the importance of including the Emergency Rental Assistance and Rental Market Stabilization Act in the next relief package. We urge you to join with other Governors to publicly make this call as well.
5. Identify opportunities for the state to reach agreement with FEMA to pay to place people experiencing homelessness in hotels and motels. Preventing the spread of COVID-19 among people experiencing homelessness is necessary to protect public health. A number of states have successfully reached agreement with FEMA for this purpose. For example, using FEMA funds, Connecticut has temporarily ended homelessness and is now planning how to ensure that people don't return to the streets when the funds run out.

6. Establish a partnership between the state and hotel/motel chains to house people experiencing homelessness and also pursue the use of college dorms that are currently sitting empty while people continue to live without basic shelter.
7. Ensure that families who are doubled up or in overcrowded housing are able to access resources for isolation and quarantine by ensuring that state rules about use of funds cover these households and that information about resources are available in multiple languages and reach potentially impacted households.
8. Direct 25% of the Education Relief Fund towards the educational needs of students experiencing homelessness or in foster care.
9. Ensure ongoing support so that no young person in Extended Foster Care ages out into homelessness during this pandemic.
10. As you consider budget reductions, please protect funding for affordable housing and homelessness services, and other services that help people meet their most basic needs. We understand the budget impact of this crisis is significant, but we can't go back on the progress we've made, especially now. Critical programs such as TANF that were deeply cut during the great recession were never made whole and those cuts have contributed to the pre-COVID-19 homelessness crisis in our state.
11. Some legislators are currently working on revenue neutral policy to increase housing stability. If you call a special session to respond to the economic impact of COVID-19, please convene the legislature in such a way that policy can be considered in addition to budget action.
12. Because of your leadership, the supplemental budget included funding to enhance our state's shelter capacity. Please ensure that any funds that have been used to respond to COVID-19 are reimbursed from the Budget Stabilization Account so those funds can be used to make progress on our ongoing housing and homelessness crisis that existed before COVID-19 entered our state.

It is critical that we learn from the past and not repeat mistakes. Instead of cutting services that our communities need, Washington should enact progressive revenue to ensure that Washington has the resources not only to avoid harmful cuts, but to leverage opportunities. For example, if an economic downturn means land or buildings can be purchased for reduced cost, we should be ready to invest in those properties for future affordable homes.

Your leadership has helped Washington flatten the curve and has prevented many more people from becoming sick. Taking these additional steps will protect even more people and improve public health across the state. We are counting on your continued leadership.