Imagine experiencing a severe condition that temporarily prevents you from working. For some barely making ends meet, it becomes a struggle to keep their home and afford their basic needs as they recover. They live each day on the edge of homelessness. Thousands of Washingtonians find themselves in this bind daily. The state’s Housing and Essential Needs program helps by providing rental assistance and such essential needs as toiletries and hygiene supplies until they’re back on their feet. Thus, supporting this program helps the state’s extremely vulnerable keep their homes. These individuals may be your neighbors or live just down the block from you. Make sure that a temporary disability doesn’t result in homelessness.

**History**

Housing and Essential Needs began after Disability Lifeline ended on November 1, 2011. While the former Disability Lifeline program provided cash assistance to nearly 32,000 low-income people that were unable to work due to a temporary disability, Housing and Essential Needs now grants funds to every county in the state to enact a local program reaching people on the brink of homelessness. The program was funded at $64 million and then sustained a further cut of $5 million, a significant decrease from the last funding level for Disability Lifeline.

**How It Works**

The Housing and Essential Needs program provides emergency rent and utility assistance (paid directly to the landlord) and provides access to basic needs like hygiene products and bus tokens through an Essential Needs Bank.

**Who the Program Serves**

Thousands of people with a permanent or temporary disability in Washington struggle to survive with incomes at or below the poverty line. These safety net programs that prevent homelessness are needed now more than ever.

**The Need is Great**

- 13.4% of people in Washington are living in poverty.
- 132,000 extremely low-income people are spending more than half of their income for rent, putting them at high risk of homelessness.

**Our Goals**

- Protect the funding for Disability Lifeline.
- Improve the program structure, given Medicaid expansion.
- Ensure people undergoing treatment for behavioral health issues can avoid homelessness and afford housing while they’re recovering.
- Preserve DSHS incapacity evaluations.
- Change the program name back to the more accurate “Disability Lifeline.”