



# 2016 Washington State Legislative Agenda

Everyone should have the opportunity to live in a safe, healthy, affordable home. Our 2016 policy priorities help move us closer to this goal.

## Lead Agenda Items

Housing Trust Fund	90-Day Notice for Rent Increase
Consolidated Homeless Grant	HEN, ABD, MCS, and SSI Facilitation
Source of Income Discrimination	Services
The Fair Tenant Screening Act	Medicaid Supportive Housing Services
The Truth in Evictions Reporting Act	Benefit

## Capital Investments and Homelessness Services

### Housing Trust Fund

**Invest \$10 million from the 2016 Supplemental Capital Budget in the Housing Trust Fund to build and preserve safe, healthy, affordable homes.**

The Housing Trust Fund allocates state funds on a competitive basis to build affordable homes. The majority of the homes built with these dollars house extremely low-income households, including people with disabilities, seniors, families with children, and more. An additional investment of \$10 million in the 2016 Supplemental Capital Budget will help create a biennial total of 2,400 newly affordable homes.

A home is the foundation for health, education, and well-being. Children need a home to study and do homework. Homes for seniors and people with mental illness ensure they stay connected to health care and treatment, while reducing the use of expensive emergency services. These investments will allow rental homes to remain affordable for at least 40 years, and help low-income households become first-time homebuyers.

### Consolidated Homeless Grant

**Address the \$7.5 million shortfall in funding to prevent and end homelessness.**

The Consolidated Homeless Grant provides support to local communities to fund services that prevent and end homelessness. There is a \$7.5 million shortfall in funding that is forcing counties to significantly reduce services and implement cuts. The state should make up this shortfall with a one-time allocation from the Operating Budget.

# Eliminating Barriers to Housing and Improving Protections for Tenants

## Source of Income Discrimination

**Prohibit discrimination against renters who rely on lawful housing subsidies or income support to help pay the rent. Pass HB 1565/Ormsby & SB 5378/Miloscia, (Kohl-Welles)**

In the search for a home, many individuals and families face outright discrimination. This occurs when landlords are unwilling to rent to Housing Choice (Section 8) voucher holders, seniors relying on social security income, veterans using housing subsidies, and people with disabilities who receive other legal sources of income. This has a significant impact on communities who disproportionately rely on housing subsidies to make ends meet: households of color, seniors, people with disabilities, and single parent households with young children.

Several municipalities in Washington have adopted laws prohibiting housing discrimination based on source of income. These protections ensure families who pay rent with a housing subsidy or other legal sources of supplement income can secure a safe and healthy home.

## The Fair Tenant Screening Act

**Pass the Fair Tenant Screening Act to make the tenant screening process more affordable and fair for both renters and landlords. Pass HB 1257/Walkinshaw & SB 5123/Frockt**

The high cost of tenant-screening reports, especially when tenants have to pay over and over, is a significant barrier to housing and mobility. Different screening companies collect virtually the same information to produce tenant-screening reports. However, each time a prospective tenant submits a single application, they must pay for a new report. These costs add up, especially when applicants are competing for vacancies in tight rental markets. Costly duplicate reports are not only unfair, but can be a significant economic barrier for low-income renters in accessing a home.

## The Truth in Evictions Reporting Act

**Pass the Truth in Evictions Reporting Act to ensure that evictions are reported only when a tenant has been proven guilty in court. Pass HB 1460/Robinson & SB 5376/Habib**

Tenant screening companies report all eviction lawsuits as equal. The tenant could have been wrongfully named in the lawsuit, been a victim of their landlord's foreclosure, or the tenant could have won their case outright. But screening companies list all eviction lawsuits as equal. No matter the outcome, tenants have a mark on their record. This mark makes accessing a rental home in the future much more difficult.

## 90-Day Notice for Rent Increase

**Allow local jurisdictions to require increased notice of significant rent increases and improve local options for relocation assistance. Pass HB 2051/Farrell & SB 5377/Miloscia, (Kohl-Welles)**

Local jurisdictions should be able to authorize more than 30 days notice of significant rent increases and should be able to ensure that landlords comply with local relocation assistance ordinances.

## Safety Net Programs

### HEN, ABD, MCS and SSI Facilitation Services

**Maintain funding for HEN, ABD, MCS, and SSI facilitation services so that Washington's elderly and disabled adults don't lose their lifeline.**

#### The Housing & Essential Needs (HEN) Program

The state's HEN program provides housing support to ensure a temporary disability does not result in homelessness for very low-income adults. The program provides rental and utility assistance, and recipients have access to essential basic need items, including transportation assistance and health/hygiene products.

#### The Aged, Blind & Disabled (ABD) Program

The state's ABD program helps extremely low-income adults with permanent mental illnesses or permanent physical disabilities by providing cash assistance of up to \$197/month while they apply to the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. When people transition from ABD to SSI, the state is retroactively reimbursed for the full cost of the ABD cash grant.

#### Medical Care Services (MCS)

The Medical Care Services program provides health coverage for immigrants who are disabled and elderly and who have legally verified immigration status.

#### SSI Facilitation Services

SSI Facilitation Services assist disabled individuals through the lengthy and complicated process of applying for federal SSI benefits.

### Medicaid Supportive Housing Services Benefit

**Create a Medicaid benefit to pay for supportive housing services.**

A Medicaid Supportive Housing Services Benefit would allow housing providers to bill Medicaid for supportive services provided to eligible residents. This would help individuals with severe and chronic health conditions get off the streets and into a healthy home. Washington has submitted a waiver request to the federal Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services that would allow for the creation of this benefit.