



WASHINGTON LOW INCOME
Housing Alliance



Washington Housing Alliance
ACTION FUND

Invest in eviction prevention to increase housing stability and to prevent homelessness

The problem

Evidence shows that evictions are a leading cause of homelessness in Washington. Black households, and Black women in particular, are far more likely to be evicted. Eviction prevention services are critical tools in the effort to prevent and end homelessness and are important in reducing racial disparities in homelessness.

In the last several years, Washington has made major strides in reducing housing barriers and preventing evictions. This includes passing just cause eviction protection and statewide right to counsel. The legislature should increase funding to prevent evictions.

Legislative solution

In 2021 the Legislature passed and funded the first in the nation statewide **Right to Counsel** (RTC) program guaranteeing a lawyer for low-income tenants in eviction court. Prior to this, 90% of cases involving low-income tenants were uncontested because tenants did not have access to an attorney and did not know their rights. But in its first six months of operation, RTC representation resulted in tenants remaining in their homes in more than 50% of closed cases. Even when tenants were evicted, many had better outcomes including more time to move or limiting actions that would make it harder to rent in the future. The total increase needed is \$4,351,389 (\$1,902,440 for FY 2024 and \$2,448,949 for FY 2025).

Continue funding for **pre-eviction civil legal aid** and add \$400,000 to allow the **Eviction Defense Screening Line** to assist tenants who are not yet eligible for right to counsel, which is available only once an eviction is filed. Pre-eviction aid helps earlier in the process. Housing stability is best assured when people get access to services and help as early as possible. The total request is \$4,987,200 (\$2.408 GFS for FY2024 and \$2.579 GFS for FY2025).