



WASHINGTON LOW INCOME  
**Housing Alliance**



Washington Housing Alliance  
**ACTION FUND**

## **Protect and expand the Housing and Essential Needs program**

### **The problem:**

The Housing and Essential Needs program provides basic needs and rental assistance for low-income individuals who are unable to work for at least 90 days due to a physical and/or mental incapacity.

Because the program is not an entitlement, when funds run out, so does access to the program. The Governor's budget increased funding by \$15 million over the 2019- 2021 budget, but that is still more than \$11 million below the 2021-2023 budget. (which was increased with federal funds.)

Because it was created as bridge to federal support, when people qualify for Supplemental Security Income/Social Security Disability Income (SSI/SSDI) benefits, HEN benefits end, and people abruptly lose their rental assistance. Someone receiving SSI can afford only about \$300 per month for rent and this cliff is causing people to fall back into homelessness. A pilot program has been in place for several years to allow some HEN recipients to continue receiving rental assistance when they qualify for SSI or SSDI.

### **Legislative solution:**

The Legislature should increase funding for the Housing and Essential Needs program by at least \$11 million over the Governor's proposed budget. The Legislature should also extend and expand the pilot program to allow HEN recipients to continue receiving rental assistance after they qualify for SSI/SSDI to prevent homelessness.