

# 2026 PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

During the 2026 state legislative session, the Housing Alliance will continue to stand up for equity while pushing for bills and budget investments that help prevent and end homelessness. Our communities are facing attacks from the federal government that threaten to significantly reduce funding for housing and homelessness and force people out of their homes. It is critical that our state lawmakers do more than ever to protect our neighbors. Because federal attacks also threaten our immigrant neighbors and our trans community, the Housing Alliance will continue to support the work of our allies in these communities.

Our 2026 policy priorities were developed after much input from people across the state. We will continue to fight to protect renters and housing stability, to defend critical housing and homelessness programs, and to stop discriminatory actions by some local governments that block affordable housing and shelter or punish people experiencing homelessness. As our state faces a significant budget deficit, it is more important than ever that state lawmakers pass progressive revenue that increases taxes paid by very wealthy corporations and individuals. None of these fights will be easy, but together we can continue to make progress towards the day when everyone in our state has the opportunity to live in a safe, healthy, affordable home.

## **Secure a new significant Capital Budget investment for affordable homes**

Washington has only 45 affordable homes for every 100 very low-income households in search of housing. But the state Capital Budget could help build and preserve more affordable homes across our state. In the 2025 legislative session, the legislature invested over \$605 million for affordable homes. This year lawmakers should match Governor Ferguson's supplemental capital budget proposal and include at least an additional \$225 million to preserve and build over 4,000 affordable homes across the state.

## **Prevent evictions: Secure \$3 million for the Right to Counsel program**

The statewide Right to Counsel program ensures that renters don't face their landlord's attorney in court without their own legal support. 90% of closed cases have resulted in people keeping their homes or moving into another permanent housing option. The program is one of the state's most cost-effective tools preventing homelessness and displacement. Households helped by the program are disproportionately Black, Indigenous, and People of Color or have disabilities. Without this \$3 million in funding, many fewer people will be served, just as evictions in Washington continue at all-time high levels.

## **Pass progressive revenue to prevent cuts and ensure that Washington can meet the needs of people across the state**

Washington is facing an ongoing budget deficit that forces lawmakers to choose between deep cuts to essential services or raising new revenue. A cuts-only approach would devastate communities and make it impossible to respond to growing needs at a time when federal budget and policy decisions are already creating significant funding gaps. Without new revenue, Washington risks rolling back hard-won progress and leaving more people without stable housing, food assistance, and basic supports. Lawmakers should reject an all-cuts budget and ensure that the wealthiest individuals and most profitable corporations contribute their fair share by passing significant progressive revenue in 2026.

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## Legalize permanent supportive housing and shelter

Washington must ensure that every community does its part to welcome the housing and shelter needed to prevent and end homelessness, but unfortunately some local governments are still deploying discriminatory tactics to delay, discourage, or block housing and shelter altogether. But the state can outlaw these practices and build on legislation passed in recent years to "legalize" the housing needed for everyone in our communities.

## Stop the criminalization of homelessness and focus on real solutions instead

In 2024, the U.S. Supreme Court made a ruling that freely allows cities to criminally punish people experiencing homelessness even when there is no shelter available to them. Now cities in Washington are increasingly passing and enforcing laws that fine, arrest, and punish people simply for trying to survive outdoors, even while failing to provide accessible shelter options. Lawmakers should protect people experiencing homelessness by passing a state law that stops this kind of criminalization. Local governments should focus on real solutions to homelessness, instead of punishing and harming people.

## Protect Washington residents from federal attacks on housing and homelessness programs

Washington is facing serious threats to housing stability due to anticipated federal budget cuts and policy changes. These actions could eliminate up to \$120 million in federal funding that currently supports proven programs that prevent and end homelessness across our state.

Without swift state action, thousands of Washington residents could lose their homes, and many more could be forced to endure longer periods of homelessness.

State lawmakers should offset the expected harm caused by the federal government by creating a \$120 million contingency fund in the supplemental budget and by passing policy to provide new flexibility for existing state funds that could be used to sustain existing programs to keep people in their homes.

## Defend against rollbacks of tenant protections or homelessness prevention

Some landlords, big real estate interests, and their lobbyists are working to roll back tenant protections and homelessness prevention efforts that keep people safe and housed. We will fight back against bills and amendments that increase housing instability or threaten to roll back hard-fought renter and homelessness protections.