

## Talking points for key policy priorities

You can find more information about these priorities on our fact sheets. This document is meant to give you some ideas for simple ways to talk with your lawmakers about why you support these issues. You don't have to be an expert on these policies for your opinion to matter to your lawmakers!

It's always helpful to share a brief statement about yourself, your organization, or why this matters to you. Practice this ahead of time so you can say it in just a few sentences! Your story will be unique, but here are some examples of how to briefly say why you care:

- *Last year my landlord tried to evict me. I was able to get support from a lawyer in the Right to Counsel program to be able to stay in my home, and I know that other people across the state could use that same kind of support.*
- *My organization works with people who are homeless. The need is greater than ever, but we have fewer options for housing that's affordable for people leaving homelessness. At the same time, most of my co-workers can barely afford their own rent. Some of us are looking for other jobs even though we love what we do – it's just not sustainable.*
- *My faith community offers overnight shelter for adults. We've seen more and more people showing up looking for a safe place to stay. Every community in our state should be required to help provide solutions to prevent and end homelessness.*

### **Include at least \$225 million in the Housing Trust Fund to preserve and build over 4,000 affordable homes (in Governor's budget)**

- The Housing Trust Fund provides homes and ends homelessness for low-wage workers, families with kids, people with disabilities, farmworkers, seniors and more. It creates shelter, rental homes, and homeownership opportunities.
- In 2023, the Department of Commerce projected that over the next 20 years our state needs to build 650,000 new homes affordable to low-income households. Those will only get built with investments from the Housing Trust Fund.
- With federal funding at risk, Housing Trust Fund investments are more important than ever.
- If your organization uses HTF money, tell your lawmaker about how the funds have impacted your community.
- If you've lived in affordable housing, tell your lawmaker how that has helped you/your family.

### **Prevent evictions: Secure \$3 million for the Right to Counsel program (in Governor's budget)**

- In eviction court, almost every landlord has a lawyer representing them. Before the Right to Counsel program started in 2021, very few tenants had legal representation.
- The court process is complex and overwhelming, especially when it could end with you losing your home. Low-income tenants shouldn't have to face their landlord's attorney on their own.
- Funding for Right to Counsel prevents homelessness. 90% of tenants who have been helped by the program have maintained permanent housing after facing an eviction.
- 2025 had the highest level of evictions in state history and this eviction crisis is continuing in 2026. Continued funding is needed to keep up with demand. Without this funding, we'll lose 17 attorneys across the state, and many more households will likely be evicted.

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

- I understand that we're facing a big budget shortfall but solving that with cuts alone will devastate services that we all rely on. Our communities are already more vulnerable because of potential federal government cuts.
- Washington should do everything possible to protect housing and human services. We want new revenue to cover the budget gap – not cuts.
- Our tax system is upside down. The lowest income people pay 14% of their income in taxes while the richest pay only 4%. You can fix this with new, progressive revenue.
- In polls and at the ballot, it's clear that Washington voters overwhelmingly support ensuring that wealthy individuals and corporations pay what they truly owe our communities to support critical services that we all benefit from.

### **Legalize permanent supportive housing and shelter**

- Our state should ensure that every community does its part to welcome the housing and shelter needed to prevent and end homelessness.
- Some local governments have used discriminatory tactics to prevent affordable housing and shelter from being built in their communities.
- House Bill 2266 and Senate Bill 6069 will ensure that local politics don't stand in the way of people accessing safe shelter and housing.

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

- Cities in Washington are passing and enforcing laws that punish people simply for trying to survive outdoors, even when they don't provide adequate shelter.
- Fining and arresting people who can't afford a home doesn't solve homelessness – and it makes it even harder for people to get a job or access housing.
- Instead of punishing people, local governments should focus on expanding access to shelter and affordable housing, and increasing services like mental health and substance use treatment.
- House Bill 2489 helps ensure local responses to homelessness align with proven strategies instead of relying on punishment that causes harm without results.

### **Protect Washington residents from federal attacks on housing and homelessness programs and shore up our affordable housing and homelessness system**

- There are serious threats coming from the federal government that could eliminate up to \$120 million in federal funding in homelessness resources.
- A lawsuit has put the federal government's plan on hold, but a final outcome probably won't be decided until after the session. If the proposed changes take effect, it could force more than 5,000 people in Washington back into homelessness.
- The budget should include a \$120 million contingency fund to make sure that people don't lose their homes if we lose those federal resources.
- Another way the state can help is to give local governments more flexibility in how they use state housing and homelessness funding. This would also help local governments support affordable housing providers that are struggling with increased costs.
- There are several bills that do this: companion bills HB 2359 and SB 6027 provide more flexibility for local governments, and HB 2244 creates more flexibility and gives local governments a new revenue option for affordable housing.