

2026 PUBLIC POLICY PRIORITIES

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.

Evictions are destabilizing for families who need a safe place to call home. Of the more than 30,000 tenants who have benefited from the Right to Counsel program since 2022, 47% of tenants identified as Black, Indigenous, or people of color, and 39% of tenants had a disability. Both groups of people are disproportionately represented as being at risk of eviction and homelessness.

Key Points:

- Eviction filings in Washington in fiscal year 2025 reached 24,368 households – a 47% increase from the pre-COVID baseline of 16,505 households in 2019.
- Studies have found that eviction causes negative repercussions for household members, including physical and mental health problems, future housing instability, education and life expectancy impacts for children, and an overall increase in the likelihood of homelessness.
- The \$3 million request from the Supplemental Operating Budget is needed to sustain the current program. Governor Ferguson's budget proposal includes \$3 million of continuing funding. If the legislature fails to include it in their final budget, 17 attorneys statewide will be eliminated, putting thousands of households at risk of losing their homes.

Making sure that rules and laws are clear and fair, so that tenants can have peace of mind, freedom to plan for the future, and safe, healthy homes is a key policy element in our "Roadmap to Housing Justice" – a comprehensive strategy to end the housing and homelessness crisis in Washington. Learn more at wliha.org/roadmap