

## Protect Washington's Lifeline for Disabled & Elderly Adults

Maintain Funding Levels for the Housing & Essential Needs Program; the Aged, Blind & Disabled Program; and SSI Facilitation Services

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**These programs are springboards helping people bounce back, to survive, recover, and thrive.**

### Steve's\* Story

Steve is an army veteran who served during the Gulf War. He enrolled



in the HEN program in January 2013. By then he had been homeless outside and in shelters for two years. On top of many serious physical health issues, he was also experiencing depression and anxiety, which were becoming more acute due to chronic homelessness. Through teamwork with Steve's housing case manager and the HEN program staff, he was enrolled in a special veterans supportive housing program. After six months, he was able to move into a subsidized Bellingham Housing Authority apartment. The HEN program was able to pay for his security deposit.

Thanks to his new home, Steve quickly got back into painting, which he finds therapeutic and just recently showed his pieces in Downtown Bellingham's monthly Art Walk. A few months after Steve moved into his own apartment, he was able to take over his own rental payments.

\*Name changed to protect his anonymity.

### Shelby's Story

"[W]hile I was in school, I suffered a terrible head injury, which led to seizures. I was later diagnosed with mental illness. [H]aving ABD meant I could take care of the basics. I used my ABD \$197 cash grant for rent, bus fare, cleaning supplies, & other personal necessities. I'm lucky I lived in an affordable building or would very likely be homeless. I feel very fortunate to have the cash grant and don't know how people who don't have it are able to manage."



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### A disability shouldn't cause homelessness.

People who are unable to work due to mental illness, physical disability, or advanced age should be able to meet their basic survival needs; access safe, healthy and affordable housing; and experience a good quality of life. Unfortunately, for many people living in deep poverty, a disability and lack of income can lead to homelessness, serious mental & physical health consequences, and poor quality of life.

The Housing & Essential Needs and Aged, Blind & Disabled programs provide a lifeline of support to disabled & elderly adults. They are a last resort safety net for people unable to work & at extreme risk of suffering poor health and even death.

**Commerce included the following language warning of very deadly consequences if HEN was cut from Governor Jay Inslee's budget proposal.**  
*"[A]pproximately 580 additional people will be living unsheltered. Some of these 580 unserved people may become hospitalized and some may die of exposure."*

### HEN, ABD, & SSI Facilitation Services provide critical support to elderly and disabled adults.

- The state's Housing & Essential Needs (HEN) program ensures that people with temporary mental illnesses (64% of the caseload) or temporary physical disabilities can meet their basic needs and keep their home when facing extreme economic hardship. The program provides rental and utility assistance. And recipients have access to essential basic needs, including transportation assistance & health/hygiene items.
- The Aged, Blind & Disabled (ABD) program helps extremely low-income adults with permanent mental health illnesses (70% of the caseload) or permanent physical disabilities by providing cash assistance of up to \$197/month while they apply to the federal Supplemental Security Income (SSI) program. **When people transition to SSI, the federal government retroactively reimburses the state for the full cost of the ABD cash grant.** ABD also provides support to low-income elderly and disabled documented immigrants not yet eligible for federal medical and income support benefits.
- **SSI Facilitation Services**, provided by the state Department of Social & Health Services (DSHS), assists disabled individuals through the lengthy and complicated process of applying for federal SSI benefits. This process can take many years. SSI is funded at \$733/month, so people are much more likely to meet their basic needs. **These services are a win-win: people with disabilities access greater stability & the state receives federal reimbursement for the interim ABD support.**

### What is the legislative solution?

**Maintain HEN, ABD, and SSI Facilitation Services at their current funding levels. We must ensure people with disabilities and seniors are able to meet their basic survival needs and access the resources they need to recover and experience a good quality of life.**