



***Washington Low Income Housing Alliance
2008 State Legislative Agenda
Lead Items***

Produce Homes For Families In Need

\$100 Million Increase to the Housing Trust Fund

In order to significantly reduce homelessness and the shortage of affordable homes for working families, the State should invest an additional \$1 billion in the Housing Trust Fund between 2008 and 2015. The Trust Fund, currently at \$130 million, is the State's primary response to the housing and homelessness problem. This effective and innovative funding source supports the construction, acquisition or rehabilitation of affordable homes. The legislature should also provide new operating subsidies necessary to ensure that Trust Fund units can serve those most in need.

Invest in Families: \$8 million for the Washington Families Fund

The Washington Families Fund (WFF) is a public-private partnership supporting service-enriched housing for homeless families. The Legislature invested \$6 million through 2006, matched by nearly \$7 million in private funds. The Legislature should sustain and expand this program, providing a new life for hundreds of kids and moving more families to self-sufficiency.

Ensure that Working Families Can Afford To Live and Thrive

Provide A Sales Tax Exemption for low income housing construction

With the cost of materials and labor on the rise it is critical that we find ways to lower the cost of developing housing for working families. A sales tax exemption on materials and labor would stretch public dollars further and create more homes for low-income renters and homebuyer opportunities for low and moderate wage-workers.

Prioritize Housing Affordability in State infrastructure funding

Inadequate infrastructure is a major barrier to creating livable communities with dense, affordable housing that is close to jobs, transportation and services. The high cost of providing this infrastructure makes it difficult to include low and moderate-income housing in the areas where it is most needed and appropriate. State infrastructure grant programs should update their criteria and prioritize projects that will support higher density, affordable and transit-oriented housing developments, consistent with local growth management planning.

For more information contact Ben Gitenstein ben@wliha.org



Incentives to preserve manufactured housing communities

Over the next year nearly hundreds of manufactured housing communities will close, leaving thousands of seniors and young families with nowhere to go. The state should create a package of tax incentives to encourage park owners to sell their park to a qualified nonprofit or housing authority, thereby preserving a critical affordable housing choice.

Protect families and ensure fairness

End Source of Income Discrimination

After waiting months or years to secure a housing voucher or a government subsidy to help make ends meet; families look to private market housing to find a place to live. Unfortunately, working families can face serious discrimination and are often unable to find an apartment. All too often this discrimination victimizes families of color. The state should ban discrimination against families who use a subsidy to help make ends meet.

Fair Zoning practices for low-income housing

Most communities in Washington State are proactive partners in providing the homes that families need to thrive. Some, however, put extra barriers and unfair requirements on the development of housing built with public dollars. The State should end this unfair practice.

Homeownership counseling funding

The rise of the sub-prime and mortgage-lending crisis has made it clear that more home-buying families need more education and support throughout the homeownership process. The State should invest new resources and should work with proven and effective partners to provide homeownership counseling and education to more families throughout the Washington.



Support

The Joint Agenda on Housing & Homelessness

The Alliance is a driving force behind the Joint Agenda on Housing & Homelessness, a combined package of new resources and system reforms that offers a roadmap towards ending homelessness and providing the homes our families need. This package is a partnership between the Alliance, The Washington State Coalition for the Homeless, The Committee to End homelessness of King County, The United Way of King County, HomeSight and Catholic Community Services of Washington.

Key elements of the Joint Agenda include:

- Increase the debt limit on the Finance Commission's tax exempt bond program
- Increase the Transitional Housing Operating and Rent program to \$15 million
- Provide housing assistance for people leaving state systems
- Ensure funding for mental health and substance abuse programs
- Increase protections for tenants facing condo conversions
- Increase protections for tenants facing manufactured home park closure
- Provide tax incentives for employer-assisted housing

Access to surplus public property for low-income housing

Often the greatest impediment to building new homes for low-income families is the scarcity of land. By prioritizing low-income housing development on surplussed publicly owned land, we can make it easier to build the homes our communities need. *(Lead Organization: Washington State Housing Finance Commission)*

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