



**EVERYONE IN WASHINGTON SHOULD HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY
TO LIVE IN A SAFE, DECENT, AFFORDABLE HOME**

Joint Legislative Priorities to Address Housing and Homelessness
In Washington State

The keys to ensuring that everyone in Washington has the opportunity to live in a safe, decent, affordable home are simple and straightforward. There are many implementing steps that can be taken, and the co-sponsors of this breakfast will bring you specific bills for adoption in the 2010 session, but they will all revolve around three basic goals:

Increase the Available Stock of Affordable and Supported Housing

We need to address our housing crisis at several levels. We need subsidized housing to help people with mental and physical disabilities stabilize their lives (and reduce their use of emergency services), and we need affordable housing so that working people can afford housing and still have enough money for the basics like groceries and gas and child care. We have proven tools to accomplish this in the Washington State Housing Trust Fund and the Operations and Maintenance funding that supports much of its housing. We are, however, at a critical point. At current funding levels there will be neither capital nor operations and maintenance for the 2010 funding round. We need to return the Trust Fund to the \$200 million level and provide the operations and maintenance funding critical to the housing it creates.

Coordinate and Maintain Housing and Services

We know that, while housing is the bedrock of personal stability, many people need additional services to maintain that stability. The Home Security Fund and the Washington Families Fund are proven successes – providing supportive services that are well coordinated with affordable housing. We must maintain and continue that funding. At the same time, we need to better coordinate the work of our state systems so that additional housing and support services come together in joint or coordinated funding allocations that are targeted to the practices that have proven track records.

Prevent People from Becoming Homeless

It is much more difficult to help someone leave homelessness than it is to prevent homelessness in the first place. Funding short-term assistance, regulating foreclosures and reducing tenant screening barriers are all effective tools in preventing homelessness, but these are not enough. We need our state institutions, our prison system, our mental health system, our juvenile justice system and our foster care system to make stable housing a priority in their discharge planning. We need to fund housing for those who are leaving state control, long enough for them to re-establishing their lives in the community.