



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

*Joint Legislative Priorities to Address Housing and Homelessness*

*Dear Legislators:*

*Housing and homelessness advocacy partners understand that this will be an extremely difficult session and thank you in advance for caring so much about the fabric of our communities. The most basic foundation in our residents’ lives is housing. There are many implementing steps that can be taken to ensure that everyone in Washington has the opportunity to live in a safe, decent, affordable home. The co-sponsors of this breakfast will bring you specific bills for adoption in the 2011 session, but they will all revolve around three basic goals:*

**Increase the Available Stock of Affordable and Supported Housing**

People with mental and physical disabilities need housing to stabilize their lives (and reduce their use of emergency services), and working people need housing they can afford and still have enough for the basics like groceries, gas and child care. The Washington State Housing Trust Fund has an established track record for stimulating the creation of housing. We are, however, at a critical point. The Trust Fund is key in both supporting and inspiring contributions from other governments and philanthropy. The Trust Fund should be funded at the \$200 million level, with provision for the operations and maintenance funding that allows us to create housing for the most vulnerable.

**Coordinate and Maintain Housing and Services**

Although 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. That funding should be maintained. 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 important tools in preventing homelessness, but our state institutions, our prison system, our mental health system, our juvenile justice system and our foster care system need 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.



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***Fund the State Housing Trust Fund at \$200 million and  
Provide Support for Operations and Maintenance of Housing Trust Fund units***

The Housing Trust Fund is the State of Washington’s primary tool for ensuring that everyone has a safe, affordable and healthy home. Since 1989, the Housing Trust Fund has invested more than \$600 million in new and improved housing, has leveraged more than \$3 billion in private and public sector support; and has increased the stock of affordable housing by more than 35,000 units across the state. These investments by the state have created thousands of jobs, and have generated millions in state and local tax revenues. The Trust Fund has a strong track record of providing quality homes that allow people to stabilize their lives and reduce their consumption of other services.

In 2009, the Journal of the American Medical Association reported that the residents of 1811 Eastlake, a 75 unit building for chronic alcoholics funded through the Trust Fund, reduced emergency services costs by \$4 million in one year. The residents cost \$2,500 less per person, per month, than their counterparts on the wait list. Affordable housing is a fiscally responsible investment for our communities.

In the ‘07/’08 biennium the Governor and the Legislature increased the Housing Trust Fund to \$200 million. In ‘09/’10, an additional investment of \$100 million was combined with \$30 million for new affordable housing programs. The investments are helping to build homes and stimulate Washington’s local economies, critical benchmarks in alleviating and preventing homelessness.

Although Washington can be proud of our track record of investing in affordable housing, more is needed to keep pace with the growing needs across the state. In King County alone, more than 25,000 people will experience homelessness this year. An estimated 155,00 households in King County currently experience extreme rent burden. Funding support is critical for operations and maintenance of Housing Trust Fund homes that serve Washington’s lowest income residents. Rental income alone is not enough to maintain buildings and to pay for the operating costs, so additional non-capital investments are needed.

By combining affordable housing with operating and services funding, the Housing Trust Fund can lift homeless people – even those with significant barriers to housing – to a higher quality of life. This benefits every community in Washington.



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***Protect Critical Homeless Programs:  
Ensure Adequate Funding for the Home Security Fund***

Beginning in 2005, the Washington State Legislature enacted a series of real estate document recording fees that are dedicated to addressing homelessness. These fees, now named the Home Security Fund, are the keystone to our work to prevent and end homelessness.

The Home Security Fund now supports the Emergency Shelter and Homeless Prevention Program (formerly ESAP), the Transitional Housing Operating and Rent program (THOR) and the Independent Youth Housing Program, as well as providing grants to local programs such as the highly-successful King County Forensic Assertive Community Treatment (FACT) program that helps stabilize mentally ill homeless persons with high criminal justice involvement.

During the 2010 supplemental session, the Washington Legislature obligated the Home Security Fund to pay also for secure and other residential crisis centers, street youth program services and HOPE beds. This brings the total obligations in the Fund to \$42.6 million. At the same time, due to the current economic recession and decline of real estate activity, the revenue generated by the document recording fees has dropped significantly.

Due to the combination of new obligations and dropping revenues, the Home Security Fund will be at least \$10.6 million (and probably \$12 million) short for the 2011-2013 biennium. In the 2013-2015 biennium, when one of the fees is scheduled to sunset, the Home Security Fund shortfall will triple to almost \$32 million.

Three actions are needed. First, the Home Security Fund should remain as a dedicated fund exclusively for homeless housing and services, with no new programs added to the fund. It is substantially over-obligated as it is, and as a result faces serious cuts in its programs. Second, the scheduled sunset of the portion of the fee established in 2009 should be eliminated. Finally, there are a set of real estate recordings (re-recordings triggered by events like sale of mortgages) that are not currently subject to the fee. These transactions generate the same need for recordings and should be subject to the same fee, which if enacted could generate the funds necessary to meet the current obligations of the Home Security Fund. Obligations may also include contributions to the Operations and Maintenance Fund that allows the Housing Trust Fund to serve the most needy.

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## *The Washington Families Fund is Asking the State Legislature for \$6 Million*

The Washington Families Fund, a successful public-private partnership, is asking the state legislature for funding of \$6 million.

The Washington Families Fund (WFF) is a public-private partnership, led by Building Changes, which seeks to expand the availability of supportive housing for families in need by providing stable, long-term funding to agencies with the best models for ending family homelessness and strengthening communities throughout Washington State. In the five years since its inception, the Washington Families Fund has identified interventions and solutions that are bringing Washington State closer to a future when at-risk families have immediate access to stable housing and supportive services that prevent homelessness and keep families together.

The Washington Families Fund has funded 10 nonprofits in King County to provide over 150 units of supportive housing with grants of nearly \$4.5 million.

The Washington Families Fund works hand-in-hand with community-based organizations statewide to transition homeless parents and their children from crisis to stability. WFF enhances the lives of families struggling against homelessness statewide by strengthening these organizations in three distinct ways:

- 1) leveraging public and private funds to provide long-term (5- and 10-year grants) financial support,
- 2) training and educating service providers so they can better connect families to economic and educational opportunities, and
- 3) continually evaluating program effectiveness and tailoring our approach to meet the unique needs of each community.

Since 2005 it has achieved consistent, positive results for more than 1,000 homeless families:

- 73 percent of families exiting the programs funded successfully obtained permanent housing;
- 73 percent of the children in these programs remained stable in the same school, with overall school stability improving by 80 percent;
- Families' average employment income increased by 27 percent, from \$987/month to \$1,249/month, and
- There was a 53% increase in the number of employed heads of households.