



WASHINGTON LOW INCOME
Housing Alliance

Housing Alliance 2023 State Legislative Priorities

What does “Housing Justice” mean to you?

Housing justice means no one is being belittled because of their past when trying to make a future for themselves. Especially when it comes to one of the fundamental needs for survival, a home. I would like to see Washington State challenge itself to better the lives of others and making housing overall an easier thing to achieve.

Housing
justice
means
stability!

To me, Housing Justice is racial justice! It means we've eliminated all discriminatory practices and policies, and created equitable access for all people to get into safe, healthy, and affordable housing in thriving communities of their choice.



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How does racism and inequity impact housing and homelessness?

“Housing Justice is racial justice! Having a safe, affordable, and stable home is a fundamental human right that should be treated as such and not as a commodity! To achieve housing justice, we must reckon with the injustices of the past. We must intentionally and collectively dismantle racist institutions; denounce modern day redlining; and build liberatory and community health oriented spaces in their place.”

“Housing Justice is the existence of systems and policies to accommodate for and solve for the historic discrimination and racist actions that have created the unequal playing field we find ourselves in.”

”It means that anyone has the same equal right to obtain housing for themselves and their families in any area they choose without discrimination”



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How are rent increases impacting you and your community?

“You need to help seniors on SSI. They worked hard and now many cannot afford their rent.”

“Housing expenses are rising too fast. Even moving is too expensive. So many just got behind [on rent] by a few months, due to illness, the cement strike, job loss, family issues, but have no extra money to catch up. They pay a monthly late fee of \$100, plus \$5 a day, then there is no hope.”

“Rents have skyrocketed and there are no stops from landlords raising rents once you move in. For seniors, like myself, it seems impossible to find affordable housing in Snohomish County. I have been living with a friend for 5 years as it is all I can afford. I sold my house 5 years ago because I wanted to retire and couldn't afford to keep up the mortgage payments. In hindsight, those payments were less than current apartment rental rates for a 1 bedroom.”

“Landlords are not being held accountable for driving the prices through the roof while also not being in compliance with many housing codes. Not fixing the property and leaving people living in terrible conditions.”

“The present level of rent increases are set to create a situation where the present number of the unhoused will increase dramatically, possibly even by more than double in some communities. The state needs to create a law that caps the rents of the state's low income elderly, disabled and veteran residents, especially those who are housing vouchers like Section 8 and HUD/VASH.”



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Looking ahead 5 years, if Washington made significant progress protecting renters, what would being a renter be like?

"Cost of living increases would be in place so people don't have to have 3 jobs simply to pay rent. There would be money for other things besides just rent. We have to get to be human."

"Being a renter would be less stressful and landlords would have more responsibility to do repairs in an efficient manor rather than putting it off months."

"I wouldn't panic every time my landlord posted something on my door or called me! I'd feel more secure and might actually unpack all my boxes and truly create a home for myself."

"You would have options within your price range, help if you fall behind, and know your rights as a renter and be able to self-advocate for things you need."



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The state should make a significant investment of \$400 million in affordable housing to build and preserve permanently and deeply affordable homes.

- This appropriation should build and preserve permanently affordable homes and invest in homeownership opportunities for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color.
- A new permanent fund source for the Housing Trust Fund would ensure significant investments. Options include a new state level Real Estate Excise Tax on very high value properties or eliminating certain tax exemptions for financial institutions.
- The state should also authorize new local options to fund affordable housing, such as a new Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) for affordable housing and operations.
- The State's Operating Budget should invest approximately \$8 million for Black, Indigenous, and other people of color led organizations for organizational support and capacity building to address inequitable access to Capital Budget (Housing Trust Fund) dollars.



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The state should invest in homelessness prevention, cash assistance, and Housing & Essential Needs rental assistance.

- Address the 50% decline in funding for homelessness prevention with General Fund dollars. The state's document recording fees are experiencing an almost 50% reduction and the state must take action to fill the gap to prevent a loss of services.
- End the Housing & Essential Needs "benefits cliff" by extending the SSI pilot statewide and making it permanent. This would allow tenants to get continued rental assistance once they qualify for SSI or SSDI.
- Change the Aged, Blind and Disabled program to end the requirement that extremely low-income, disabled people pay back the benefit.
- Bring back the cash assistance program for temporarily disabled extremely low-income people that was eliminated during the great recession budget cuts in 2011.



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The state should invest in eviction prevention.

- Continue funding for pre-eviction civil legal aid and add \$400k to allow the Eviction Defense Screening Line to assist tenants who are not yet eligible for right to counsel. Total request is \$2.408 million (this includes inflation adjustment).
- Increase funding for statewide Right to Counsel to properly operate the program, meet statutory requirements and serve eligible tenants. Total increase needed from baseline is \$1,953,561 in FY 2024 and \$2,502,860 in FY 2025.
- Increase funding for the Tenancy Preservation Program (TPP) and Landlord Mitigation Fund. There is a currently a backlog of requests from landlords and the TPP program is a critical strategy to prevent evictions. Commerce anticipates that an appropriation of approximately \$10 million would address the backlog and prevent many tenants from experiencing eviction and homelessness.



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The state should support and stabilize the nonprofit housing and homelessness workforce.

- Make the 2022 one-time Department of Commerce grantee administrative increase permanent.
- This would impact nonprofit organizations providing affordable housing and homelessness services that are funded through the state budget.
- They would be required to raise wages and take other actions to stabilize their workforce and fill vacant positions.
- More ideas are being discussed and explored – stay tuned!



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The state should address rent increases.

- HB 1904* (Rep. Peterson, introduced in 2022) would require landlords to provide 6 months' notice of significant rent increases, provide tenants with the right to quit their lease due to the rent increase, and cap late fees. Applies to both residential tenants and manufactured housing tenants.
- Prevent rent gouging by capping rent increases, cap and regulate fees, and close the just cause loophole that allows landlords to use rent increases to deny tenants of their rights under the state Residential Landlord Tenant Act.

**All bill numbers will be re-assigned for the new biennium starting on January 9th, 2023.*



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The state should enforce obligations and protections under the State Landlord Tenant Act.

- Pass HB 2023* (Rep Hackney, introduced in 2022) to create an enforcement mechanism for landlord obligations under the residential landlord tenant act.
- This would create a legal process for tenants to hold their landlord accountable and to shift state laws from “self-help laws” to rights that can be enforced by a court of law. This would create a fast, very affordable and very accessible court process for tenants to ask a judge to intervene.
- Right now, tenants have no mechanism to hold their landlord accountable even when tenants are illegally locked out, even when tenants face serious repair issues, even when landlords violate source of income discrimination protections, even when landlords harass tenants or illegally enter apartments, etc.
- This would also put tenant protections under the enforcement of the State Attorney General and the “consumer protection act”. The CPA provides important protections and penalties when violated.

**All bill numbers will be re-assigned for the new biennium starting on January 9th, 2023.*



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Imagine it's five years from now and we've made major progress toward a safe, affordable home for everyone in Washington. What does your community look or feel like when everyone has a safe, affordable place to live?

"I would say my community feels more active and free. Active in the sense that they are not exhausted from working 2 or even 3 jobs to have housing."

"People not only have a place to live that they can afford with their salary (without having to pick up overtime or second jobs), but people have the ability to choose where they live, whether that be related to space, neighborhood, etc. People who need social supports are able to access Permanent Supportive Housing. Anyone who is homeless is able to easily access shelter that feels safe. No one is discharged from the hospital to the street because of lack of shelter access."

With safe affordable housing there would be lower overdose and suicide rates. Crime rates against [people experiencing homelessness] homeless, and the mentally ill would be lower as well.

It is a lovely place. It's safe to take a walk. Neighbors start caring, and sharing and spending time with each other. Time with others opens eyes to community needs, action by all to get involved is possible.



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Fall Lunch & Learn Series on Racial Justice, Equity & Culture

- Implicit Bias and Impacts in Housing and Homelessness with Pat Tucker
November 17, 12:00 – 1:00
- Why Tenants' Rights are critical for Racial Justice and Ending Homelessness
December 15, 12:00 – 1:00
- Zoom Registration for all events:
<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZ0sdO6oqz0vH9Kowuwew0vCU5sFibJYs-B9>
- A recording is available for the October event “Housing Justice is Racial Justice 101: How this nation's history of structural racism continues to affect the state of housing and homelessness for racialized peoples.”
If you missed the 10/20 event but would like the recording, please email Ma.Caroline Lopez at macarolinel@wliha.org



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Upcoming Advocacy Opportunities!

- **Tenants Town Hall! December 19th 5:30 – 7:00**
Email Po at PoL@wliha.org for more details!
- **Housing & Homelessness Advocacy Day,
February 6th 2023**
- **Sign up for Housing Alliance Action Alerts to stay
apprised all session: www.wliha.org**