

# 2021 State Legislative Priorities

\*Due to the swift pace of the legislative session, any bill is subject to change. (Last updated 3/3/2021)

**Prevent more people from becoming homeless:** Keep people in their homes, reduce barriers to finding housing, and protect tenants from unjust evictions.

- **SHB 1236 (Macri)** – Protects tenants against discrimination, displacement, and retaliation by ensuring that landlords can only evict tenants for legitimate business reasons.
- **HB 1441 (Morgan)** – Ensures that tenants unable to pay rent during the COVID-19 pandemic can find housing in future by preventing landlords from denying a housing application to prospective tenants evicted for nonpayment of rent accrued during the pandemic.
- **HB 1277 (Orsmy)** – Updates our state's Document Recording Fee by \$100 (this fee is applied when people buy or sell property) and uses some of this revenue to fund rental assistance programs.
- **SSB 5160 (Kuderer)** – Prevents evictions by helping landlords and tenants access rental assistance programs, requiring landlords to establish payment plans for any unpaid rent accrued during COVID-19 pandemic, and providing legal representation for tenants facing eviction.

**Create housing and shelter for people who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness**

- **HB 1070 (Ryu)** – Creates a “key” so local jurisdictions that opt to implement a .001 local sales tax for affordable housing and behavioral health facilities may use these revenues to acquire properties to quickly create additional capacity to house people.
- **HB 1220 (Peterson)** – Supports emergency shelters and housing through local planning and development regulations (Growth Management Act). Helps ensure that all communities recognize and include a range of housing types – including shelters and permanent supportive housing – and prevents cities from discriminating against certain short-term accommodation (homeless shelters) while allowing others (hotels, airbnbs).

**Help people meet their basic needs:** Update cash and food assistance for Washington residents.

- **HB 1151 (Leavitt)** – Updates eligibility for cash and food assistance programs to take current costs of living into account.

**In the Budget:** Expand and ensure no cuts to **Housing & Essential Needs (HEN)** and **Aged, Blind, Disabled (ABD)** assistance programs.

**Restore voting rights; improve police tactics and transit access by reducing negative effects of the criminal-legal system and over-policing.**

- **HB 1078 (Simmons)** – Supports social and civic re-entry into society by restoring voting rights to people once they re-enter their communities after incarceration. An estimated 20,000 Washingtonians cannot vote currently despite living in their communities, paying taxes, and working.
- **HB 1054 (Johnson)** – Prohibits law enforcement officers from using chokeholds and deadly force, police dogs, or military-grade weapons on citizens, and concealing badge information.
- **HB 1301 (Fitzgibbons)** – Creates new pathways for regional transit agencies to address fare enforcement in-house, without involving the criminal-legal system.

**Fix our upside-down tax structure**

- **HB 1496 (Senn)** - creates a more progressive tax system in Washington by enacting an excise tax on sales and extraordinary profits of high valued assets.

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- **HB 1465 (Orwall)** – creates an Equity in Housing Fund for rental assistance, foreclosure prevention, and behavioral health services and makes the Estate Tax more progressive.

**We urge Washington lawmakers to ensure health, safety, and housing for people experiencing homelessness by enacting legislation and writing budgets that:**

- **Create and sustain affordable housing opportunities** for people living with behavioral health disabilities and experiencing homelessness through increased funding for permanent supportive housing operations, maintenance, and services.
- **Create a behavioral health crisis alternative response system** that is centered on the principles of equity and trauma informed care and results in people who are experiencing crises being connected to appropriate services rather than law enforcement and incarceration.
- **Ensure behavioral health agencies have sufficient resources** to hire, retain, and expand needed skilled staff and provide behavioral health services that are accessible and responsive to those who need them by increasing behavioral health Medicaid rates and non-Medicaid behavioral health funding.
- **Prioritize, include, and center people without homes, people living with behavioral health disabilities, and essential direct service staff** who provide housing, homeless services, and behavioral health services in Washington's COVID-19 pandemic response and recovery. Ready access to COVID19 vaccines and testing; increased pay, appropriate PPE, and workforce stabilization and support; and more quality, COVID-19 appropriate shelter, services, and permanent supportive housing are all critical to ensuring health, safety, and well-being of homeless services and housing workers and the people they serve – and to rebuilding a stronger set of investments in effective care and lasting solutions.