



2018 Overview

In 2018, HDC's staff, board, members and advocates stood up to advocate for affordable homes, equitable communities, and to end to homelessness. Together, we:

Increased funding for affordable homes and homelessness assistance

\$107 million in the Biennial Capital Budget for the Housing Trust Fund.

The Housing Trust Fund builds and preserves affordable homes. It primarily serves people with the lowest incomes and those with special needs, including people with disabilities, families with children who are homeless, seniors, youth and young adults, and veterans. This investment will create approximately 3,500 affordable homes.

House Bill 1570 helps an additional 11,500 people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness access housing assistance and services. This is funded by a \$22 increase to a fee that is paid when real estate documents are filed, such as those signed to close on a new home purchase. This is the state's primary source for funding homelessness services and is split between the state and counties so local communities can quickly address their most pressing needs. The increase will generate approximately \$26 million each year to fight homelessness. Additionally, this bill removes the expiration date on the fee so that communities have a permanent and reliable source of funding to reduce homelessness. Finally, the bill fixes a problem created in 2014 which mandated 45% of all state dollars be used on rental assistance solely on the for-profit rental market. Now, state funded rental assistance can also be used in nonprofit housing geared toward serving people exiting homelessness who may have multiple barriers to securing for-profit housing.

Removing barriers to housing and preventing more people from falling into homelessness

Banning source of income discrimination (House Bill 2578)

After more than a decade of advocacy, when this bill goes into effect, landlords will no longer be allowed to refuse to rent to someone just because they use rental or income assistance to help pay the rent. The bill also creates a mitigation fund to reimburse landlords for improvements necessary to rent to households with certain housing assistance and provides landlords access to funds if there are damages beyond normal wear and tear. The mitigation fund includes important consumer protections for tenants, including prohibiting landlords from taking legal action against a tenant if they have received reimbursement from the mitigation fund.

Preventing homelessness by expanding access to the Housing and Essential Needs Program (House Bill 2667)

Before this bill's passage, people with permanent disabilities and people whose primary disability is a substance use disorder were ineligible for Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) rental assistance. This causes people with disabilities to become homeless. This bill fixes that by allowing people with permanent disabilities to retain their housing assistance while they apply for federal disability benefits.

Improving access to federal benefits by providing free access to medical records needed to appeal a denial to the Supplemental Security Income (SSI) or Social Security Disability Insurance (SSDI) programs (House Bill 1239)

People who are appealing a denial to SSI or SSDI must obtain a copy of their medical records in order to prove their disability status. Washington has the highest medical record copy fee in the country, which is prohibitive for people with low-incomes and creates a substantial barrier that prevents people from accessing federal disability benefits. This bill provides free access to those records once every two years and will help more people access economic security.

Improving housing stability of people experiencing financial hardships by expanding access to public assistance programs by updating asset limits (House Bill 1831)

This bill allows people to keep a greater portion of their resources and still be eligible for public assistance (like the Housing and Essential Needs and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families programs). It will prevent people from having to sell a reliable car that lets them get to work or to the doctor and lets them maintain a greater amount in savings to better weather a financial emergency.

Other key policies for the building and preserving of affordable homes

Clarifying a real estate excise tax exemption for homes built with Low Income Housing Tax Credits (House bill 2444)

Affordable homes built with federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credits go through a transfer of ownership when the for-profit investor exits the partnership, usually 15 years after the homes are built. No cash is involved in this ownership transfer, but without this clarification, nonprofit organizations could be taxed on this transfer at a significant amount. This bill requires the state to continue the current practice of not charging the Real Estate Excise Tax for an additional 17 years which allows nonprofit housing providers to keep those resources for providing affordable housing and services in their communities.

Promoting the use of surplus public property for affordable homes (House Bill 2382)

In many Washington communities, the cost of land has a significant impact on the ability to create homes affordable to people with low incomes. This is especially true in high cost areas like the Puget Sound region. This bill makes it easier to transfer underutilized public property so it can be used for affordable homes.

Thanks for being part of the movement for safe, healthy, affordable homes.