



Lowel Krueger, President  
Ashley Lommers-Johnson, Vice-President  
Lona Hammer, Secretary  
Duane Leonard, Treasurer

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## 2019 STATE LEGISLATIVE AGENDA

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*The Association of Washington Housing Authorities (AWHA) supports the legislature's goal of a decent home in a healthy, safe environment for every resident of the state. Families who lack stable housing rarely are able to make strides in education or employment, manage their health or day-to-day tasks. We are committed to working in local communities across Washington to ensure that every family has a decent, safe, affordable home.*

### **Increase Capital Investments in Affordable Housing**

Capital investment from the state is Washington's primary mechanism for ensuring access to housing for families and vulnerable individuals. Through preservation of existing affordable housing, new construction and rehabilitation, capital funding provides place-based resources critical to strengthening communities. The Housing Trust Fund (HTF) has been a critical tool for the state. Typically every \$1.00 invested by the state leverages \$5.50 from other sources. AWAH is asking the legislature to fund the Housing Trust Fund with a \$200 million allocation in the 2019-2021 Capital Budget. In addition, we support equitable reforms to the state Real Estate Excise Tax (REET) that would produce additional revenue to support statewide affordable housing investments.

### **Increase Local Funding Options to Build Affordable Housing**

Local governments have recently been confronted by rising housing costs and corresponding levels of homelessness in their communities but often lack the resources to adequately fund proven solutions. The legislature should pass legislation authorizing local governments to implement new tools to finance affordable housing construction and fund supportive services. In 2019, AWAH supports legislation that would allow local governments to bond against a portion of the state sales tax for purposes of issuing bonds to finance affordable housing.

### **Protect and Properly Fund Essential Programs that Serve the Most Vulnerable**

Programs such as Housing and Essential Needs (HEN), Medicaid, Aged, Blind and Disabled Program (ABD), State Food Assistance Program (FAP), Basic Food, and Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) make it possible for very low-income individuals and families to meet the basic necessities of life. Budget cuts to these programs over the past few years have reduced available options and put thousands of families throughout the state at risk. Specifically in 2019, the legislature should increase funding for the HEN program in response to policy changes made in previous years that have expanded the eligible pool of potential beneficiaries.

### **Ensure Public Works Law Continues to Work for Affordable Housing Providers**

Passed in the 2018 legislative session, SB 5493 directed the Department of Labor & Industries to use a new methodology for calculating prevailing wages. As a result of this legislation, prevailing wages for residential trades saw dramatic increases that have put in peril some affordable housing projects and weatherization programs. AWAH supports a common sense resolution to this issue that ensures affordable housing providers are not unduly burdened with unexpectedly high project costs.

### **Incentivize Affordable Homeownership Opportunities**

AWHA members support many low-income residents as they achieve self-sufficiency. For many families, this path leads towards homeownership. While rising housing costs have put traditional single-family homeownership out of reach, the lack of condominium development across the state due to developer liability concerns has further left a gap in the affordable homeownership arena. AWAH supports legislation that would allow for further development of condominiums as a means of creating a broader pool of affordable homeownership opportunities for low-income residents in Washington State.