



Dear Majority Leader Schoesler, Speaker Chopp, Chair Braun and Chair Ormsby,

We write to you, as leaders of organizations representing a multitude of faith communities, and as faith leaders, to voice our deep concern over the increase in homelessness and housing instability plaguing families across Washington State. While we understand and respect that the McCleary decision is of paramount concern, as you negotiate a final budget we implore you to not fund schools at the expense of students and families in Washington who lack stable and secure housing.

Our faith traditions command that we, as a society, care and speak up for those who do not have shelter. Our holy books -- the Bible, the Torah and the Quran -- all espouse our shared responsibility to ensure the most vulnerable among us -- the orphan, the widow, the sick and the stranger -- have a place to rest their head.

Unsheltered homelessness has [increased 10% across the state](#) in the last year. More children, families and elderly are living in cars and on the streets and do not have adequate income for basic needs. *The status quo is not enough.* We respectfully ask that you take the following actions in crafting a final budget to protect the most vulnerable:

1. **Pass [SHB 1570](#), eliminating the sunset on document recording fees** and giving counties the ability to raise additional funds to combat homelessness. This fee provides 60% of state funds to fight homelessness.
2. **Protect funding of the Housing and Essential Needs Grant (HEN)**, which provides housing assistance to low-income adults who are experiencing homelessness or are at imminent risk of homelessness and can't work due to a temporary physical or mental health disability.
3. **Restore funding for the Aged Blind and Disabled Grant (ABD)** to its pre-recession level of \$339 per month and ensure there is no time limit. ABD provides crisis cash assistance to elderly adults and adults with permanent disabilities who are unable to work and are living on very low incomes while they apply for federal benefits.
4. **Prioritize the Housing Trust Fund in the Capital Budget** - Fund the Housing Trust fund at at least \$106 million. Every dollar funded is smartly leveraged with six dollars from other public and private sources to build thousands of new, affordable homes.
5. **Restore funding for the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Grant (TANF)** to its pre-recession level of \$562 for a family of three. TANF provides a temporary lifeline of cash assistance to help children and families in crisis.

6/20/2017

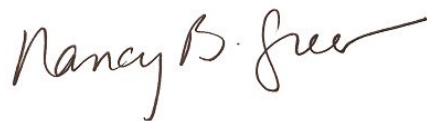
cc: Minority Leader Kristiansen, Minority Leader Nelson

People of faith care deeply about Washington fulfilling its paramount duty. But we cannot possibly help students thrive if their families are living in shelters. In order to amply provide for the public education of each child, students must also be safe and secure. They must have a home.

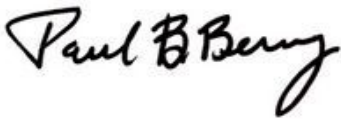
We ask that you take a reasoned approach to the budget -- do not balance it on the backs of those in need. With children and families in crisis, and homelessness on the rise, we support new revenue to restore funds cut during the great recession and devote much needed resources to affordable housing and combatting homelessness. We ask you to consider the same.

It is a widely held belief among leaders of many faiths that society and government are judged by how they care for their weakest members. Please remember our weakest members, and do not forsake your moral obligation to the orphan, the widow, the sick and the stranger as you negotiate a final budget.

In Gratitude for Your Service,



Nancy B. Greer
President and CEO
Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle



Reverend Paul Benz
Co-Director
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Elise DeGooyer
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