

# Housing in Reentry

End Housing Discrimination and  
Homelessness Following Reentry

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Housing, Human Services, and Veterans Committee

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Washington State  
Department of  
**Commerce**

# We strengthen communities

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**HOUSING  
HOMELESSNESS**



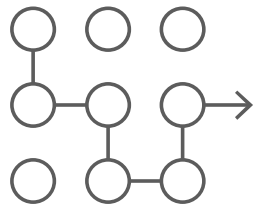
**INFRASTRUCTURE**



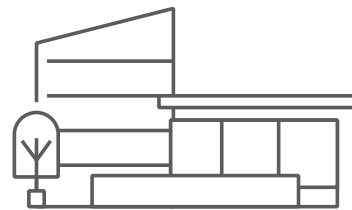
**BUSINESS  
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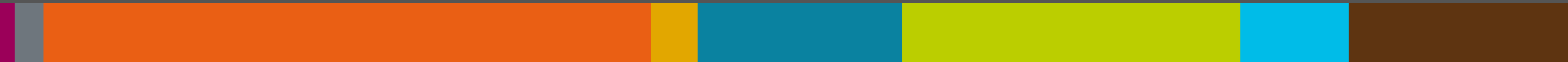


**CRIME VICTIMS &  
PUBLIC SAFETY**



**COMMUNITY  
SERVICES**

# Introduction to the Housing Problem



# Understanding the issue

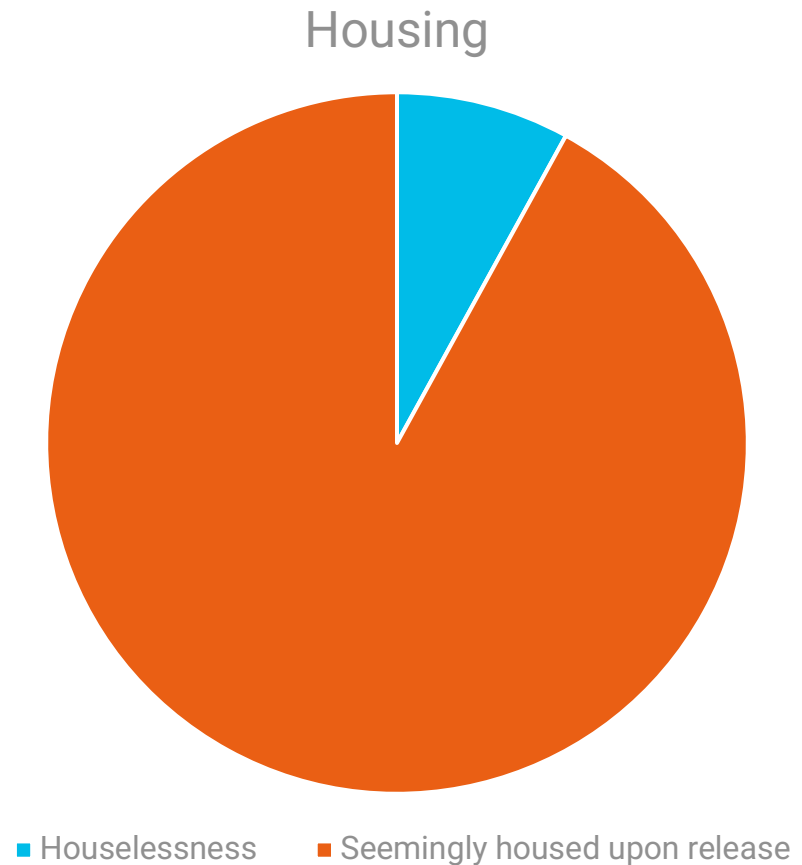
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- Access to safe and affordable housing remains a primary barrier to successful reentry.
- The council emphasized this crisis in previous reports to the legislature during legislative testimony, work sessions and legislative and community events.
- Housing will be a top priority for the council until everyone can exit from incarceration into affordable housing.

# Releasing into homelessness

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- Approximately 8% of individuals released from DOC custody, or nearly one in 10, report releasing directly into homelessness.
- This percentage does **not** include county jail releases into homelessness, federal prison releases into homelessness, people releasing into unstable or unsafe housing situations, or people who become houseless after release.



# Barriers to housing after release

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- Following incarceration, it is incredibly difficult for most people to quickly attain the necessary rental history, references, deposit, credit score, etc., to rent housing successfully.
- Even if someone meets standard tenancy requirements, people are often denied because they cannot pass the background check.
  - Ex. White House internship story

# Impact on reintegration

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- Access to safe and stable housing for people directly impacted by incarceration is paramount to healthy individuals, families, communities, successful reentry and societal reintegration.
- Without safe and stable housing, it is nearly impossible to maintain health care (including mental health and substance use disorder treatment), maintain employment or participate in vocational training or higher education.

# Recommendations





# Legislative Recommendations

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- **Legislative options:**
  - Pass the Housing Justice Act
  - Expand, reform and fully fund the Department of Corrections (DOC) Housing Voucher Program
  - Use public land to provide reentry housing
  - Continue to build and fund safe and affordable housing throughout the state and support community-based, holistic reentry programs

# Pass the Housing Justice Act

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## The problem:

- Prospective tenants, property owners and property management companies currently have no direction from the state on when, if ever, housing discrimination based on a prior criminal arrest or conviction is permissible.

## The solution:

- The Housing Justice Act addresses rental housing discrimination against prospective tenants with arrest and conviction records that meet all other qualified tenant criteria.

# Expand funding and eligibility for the DOC Housing Voucher Program

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## The problem:

- The DOC Housing Voucher Program contracts with housing providers across the state to temporarily fund the housing expenses for eligible people released from DOC custody. People who are not released to community custody supervision are currently ineligible.

## The solution:

- Expand eligibility for all people leaving DOC custody, create a similar county jails program, and fully fund each. The council advises against strict, short time limits on these programs.
- It is less costly to invest in reentry than to set people up for failure.

# Build more safe and affordable housing throughout the state and support community-based programs

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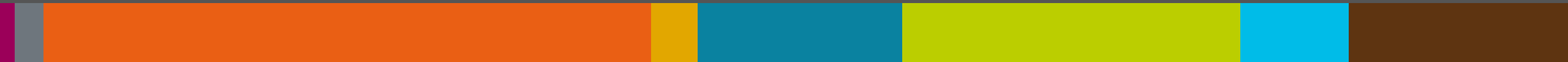
## The problem:

- Lack of available housing units for people reentering society

## The solution:

- Build more safe, affordable permanent housing that formerly incarcerated people would be eligible to live in.
- Support community-based housing programs, particularly those that are peer-led and offer holistic services.

# Addressing Historical Harms



# Directly confront racism, poverty, stigma and discrimination

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- Policies must be race, gender, community and culturally informed.
- People convicted of certain offenses face challenges retaining rental housing or living with family or friends.
- Investment in successful reentry is an investment in public safety and strengthens families and communities.

A strong investment in reentry will reduce recidivism, improve public safety and save huge sums of taxpayer's money. It will also help reclaim lives lost to the cycle of incarceration and make our communities stronger.



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# Thank you!

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