

October 09, 2025

To Whatcom County Administration and Council:

This memo is an accompaniment to the draft Whatcom County Homeless Housing Plan from members of the Whatcom County Housing Advisory Committee. The committee members appreciate the work of the Whatcom County Health and Community Services staff members and stakeholders who provided input into the draft plan.

Staff work has been robust over the past nine months, and the committee would appreciate time in the future with staff and Council to discuss some of the more complex issues. Those policy areas where more time is needed include:

- **Homelessness Prevention** – This plan could benefit from more discussion of key and substantive data about the importance of early childhood interventions. This includes mitigating childhood trauma by ending or preventing homelessness and investing in wraparound supports can have lasting generational impacts and improve housing and health outcomes for our community into the future. Studies on Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs) are multiple and uncontroversial, demonstrating again and again the critical role homeless prevention and other public health interventions have on addressing homelessness intergenerationally across our community.
- **Families with Children** – This plan could benefit from more discussion of the way families with children are counted in the data. Currently, the plan uses data on a household level, meaning it counts an individual in a single-person household as the same number as a family in a four-person household: both are comprised of one single household and represented in that way. For example, in all the years 2023, 2024, and 2025 (to date), individuals in families with children have comprised most of the new intakes to the Housing Pool: 56%, 57%, and 55%, respectively. If represented as *households* rather than individuals, those percentages drop to 29%, 31%, and 29% respectively.
- **Prioritization** – This plan needs more discussion and evaluation before implementing any re-prioritization methods. Re-prioritization should be done carefully and using current data and best practices using a collaborative approach that seeks to better define and deliver equitable household and individual supports.

We believe all household types should be able to access pathways out of homelessness through each intervention style, and that it is critical for any system of prioritization to be firmly rooted in efficacy and consistent with related planning documents. We appreciate your consideration of our input, and look forward to continuing this conversation in the future.

Signed,

WCHAC (or a portion of the members)