



WASHINGTON

State Independent Living Council

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## Position on Housing

Washington State Independent Living Council  
Romel Mackelprang, Chair  
Robert Honan, Executive Director

**Position:** It is the position of the Washington State Independent Living Council (SILC) that housing is a fundamental right for all individuals in this country. Further, the Council believes that the housing needs of persons with disabilities are not being met by developers, local housing authorities, United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), landlords, real estate brokers and agents, and city planners. While no one entity is responsible to address all facets of the housing crises for persons with disabilities, a more coordinated effort to address accessible and affordable housing is dire.

**Background:**

- In 1949, Congress committed to a “decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.” Our country has failed to deliver on this pledge.
- People with disabilities who receive their income from the federal Supplemental Security Income program have been among the hardest hit by this housing crisis. If we want to end homelessness completely, rather than simply “manage” it as we have been doing since the 1980’s we must make sure that all of our neighbors, including people with disabilities, have housing they can afford.
- *Disability and Poverty:* It is widely known that many, if not most, individuals with disability also live in poverty (World Bank, United Nations)

- *Disability and Affordable Housing.* Housing is very expensive for anyone, but compounded with costs of health care, assistive technology and other expenses, renting or owning a home becomes even more difficult.
- *Accessibility.* Simply put, there are not enough accessible apartment units or homes in this state. This was a common theme in all of the SILC public forums in April-June 2007. Physical accessibility is not the only issue that is a concern. Many individuals at the public hearings also suggested that they were being pushed out, due to rising costs of dwellings in the central part of the city/ town, to outlying areas of towns and cities- away from public transportation. Access to goods and services- and employment- is rapidly becoming an issue of concern in many communities. Participants in the Longview and Seattle Public Forums (May 2007) made special mention of this issue.
- *Reduced funding.* There has been a substantial reduction in Section 811 or Supportive Housing Vouchers nationally in recent years (O'Hara, A & Miller, E, Going at it Alone: The Struggle to Expand Housing Opportunities for Persons with Disabilities, 2000).
- *Demand:* HUD (2000) states that demand far outstrips supply. Based on evidence from the SILC public hearings of 2007, this is still no doubt true. In addition, Washington Center for Independent Living 704 Reports (reports to their federal funder, Rehabilitation Services Administration) report that housing services are of very high demand for types of services requested.
- It was reported at many of the public forums the SILC hosted that landlords are in need of training on disability sensitivity and awareness and Fair Housing laws.

**Conclusion:** The SILC, as demonstrated from ample evidence, believes there is a serious housing problem for individuals with disabilities in this state. We believe in the following:

- The right to live in the least restricted and segregated setting desired by the individual;
- The right to long-term supports and services, at whatever level required, in order that people with disabilities live as independently as possible;
- The choice of control over one's environment, which is a basic right of all citizens;
- The right to obtain housing that is accessible; and
- The right to obtain housing that is within one's income.
- The right to be at the table when discussing housing issues that directly impact our lives (exercising the independent living philosophy).

The SILC believes that it is incumbent upon state and federal legislators, HUD, Landlords, developers, and local officials- WITH the support and participation of the disability community- to work together to come up with solutions to the housing crises the many individuals with disabilities experience.

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