



# Homelessness, Housing & Human Services Issue Brief

**Support and enhance responses to increase affordable housing, decrease homelessness, and improve a strained mental and behavioral health system.**

Urban and rural communities throughout the state are grappling with increasing challenges on our streets. The number of people experiencing homelessness is growing in many of our communities, spurred on by lack of affordable housing and a poorly-funded mental health and substance abuse system. Cities are struggling to solve these issues with limited resources.

Cities need both an adequately-funded traditional service delivery system as well as a stronger partnership with the state, counties, and nonprofit partners.

## Strong cities need:



### Increased resources to fight homelessness

Increase the document recording fee (**HB 1570**).

This real estate transaction fee provides the bulk of state funding for homelessness programs at the state and local levels. The state needs to expand investments in homelessness assistance.



### New tools to create affordable housing

Create new local options (**HB 1797**) to generate revenue for homeless services and for capital construction of affordable housing and new tools to promote affordable multifamily construction.



### A strengthened mental health delivery system

Ensure appropriate funding for the mental health and chemical dependency systems. City streets are where the consequences of an underfunded mental health and chemical dependency system stand out. Cities support efforts to provide necessary funding to state and county mental health and chemical dependency systems. This includes sufficient Medicaid reimbursement rates, support for coordinated treatment, increasing no- or low-barrier treatment beds, support for step-down services and crisis facilities, and programs for transient drug populations.



### A strengthened partnership between cities and existing service providers

Create a program to leverage investments in behavioral health efforts already being made by cities. Cities are not direct service providers, but because the demand is so high, many communities are investing limited resources. Each city has unique challenges and many are partnering with service providers to address those challenges. Focused investment from the state would stretch these efforts further by supporting city programs that provide access to care, diversion from incarceration, de-escalation, and other means for targeted relief.



### Robust prevention efforts

Create a statewide prescription drug takeback program (**HB 1047**) and expand access to medically-assisted treatment. The opioid crisis requires a multifaceted approach, including prevention. Seventy percent of people who abuse prescription medicines get them from family or friends. We need to make it easier to safely dispose of unwanted drugs and reduce the opportunity for drugs to fall into wrong hands.

[more details on back](#)



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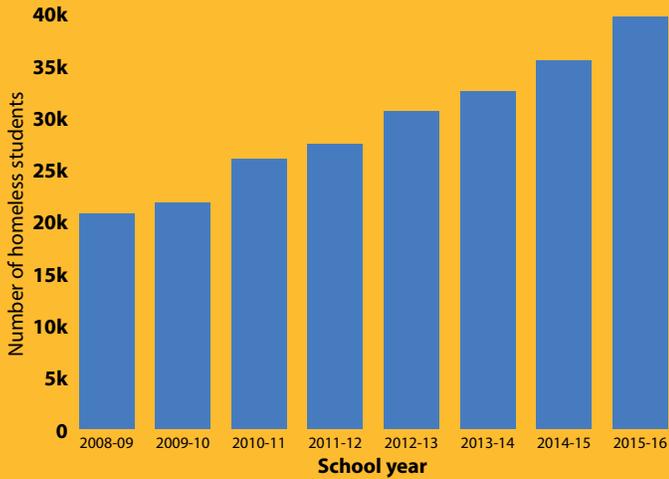
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# More details cont.

Since 2008 there has been a 90% increase in the number of homeless students



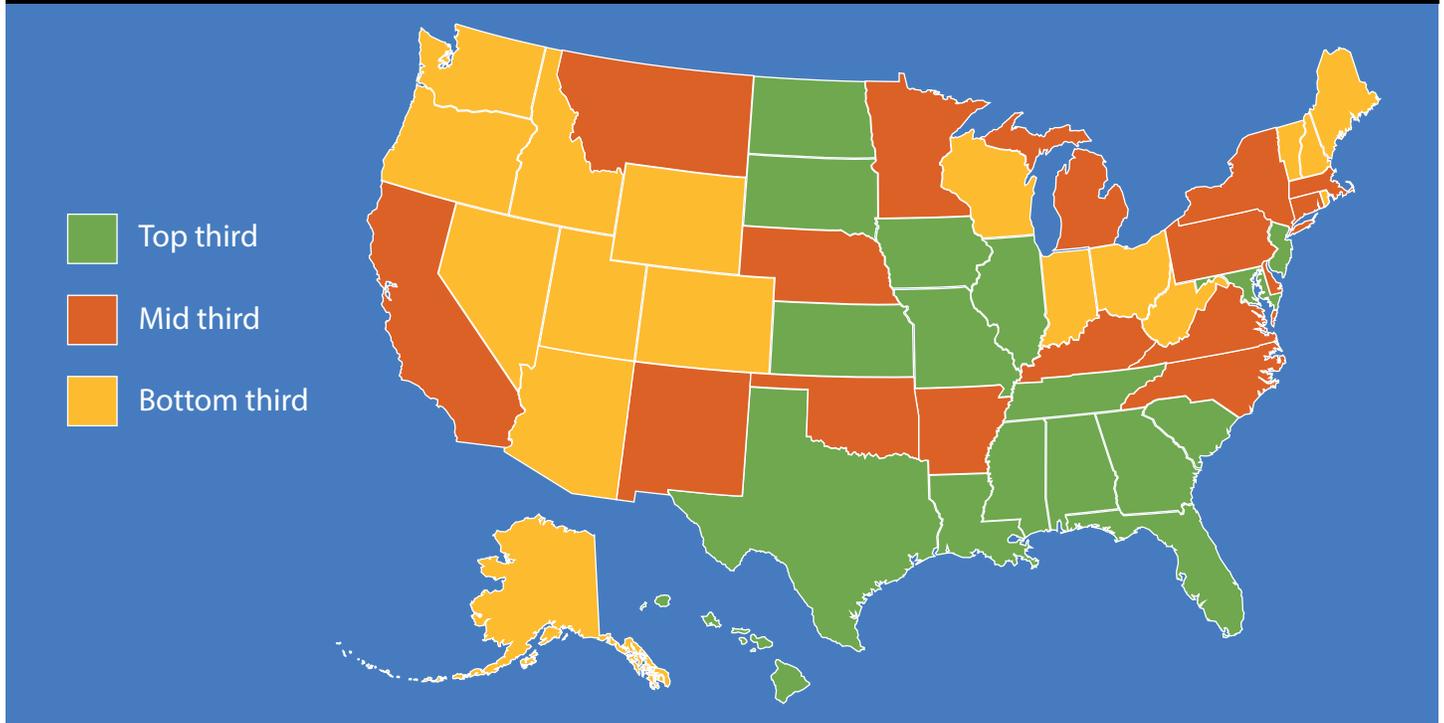
Source: Washington State Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

For every \$100 increase in rents, there is an increase of 6-32% in homelessness. Statewide rents increased by \$111 from 2012 to 2015



Source: Census Bureau, American Community Survey

Washington ranks in the bottom third of states when considering prevalence of mental illness combined with access to care



Source: Mental Health America

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