

## WSSC 2009 LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

### HOUSING

#### PRINCIPLES

*The lack of safe, affordable housing requires a renewed commitment to increase the supply of quality housing and to preserve, maintain, and improve existing housing through public/private partnerships, especially with religious groups and community organizations. The USCCB continues to oppose unjust housing discrimination and to support measures to meet the credit needs of low-income and minority communities.*

Forming Consciences for Faithful Citizenship, USCCB, 2007

*Many families cannot find or afford decent housing, or must spend so much of their income for shelter that they forego other necessities, such as food and medicine.... [The Catholic bishops] support housing policies which seek to preserve and increase the supply of affordable housing and help families pay for it.*

Putting Children and Families First, USCCB, 1999

Every person should have a safe, decent, affordable place to live. The home is the foundation for raising children, seeking comfort, and preparing oneself to participate in broader society through work, education, and civic engagement. For those living in or near poverty, help must be provided to acquire and maintain adequate, affordable, safe housing and the utilities necessary to make it livable.

**THE HOUSING TRUST FUND (HTF):** The HTF helps low-income families and individuals acquire housing by providing funds and tax credits to increase the supply of housing. The current level of funding is \$200 million for the 2007-2009 biennium.

**TRANSITIONAL HOUSING:** The Operating and Rent (THOR) program for homeless families and individuals demonstrates that short-term rental vouchers combined with support services can provide a quick exit from homelessness or prevent homelessness altogether. The THOR program was made permanent in statute last session and its services were expanded to include adults without children, youth, and people at risk of homelessness.

**WASHINGTON FAMILIES FUND (WFF):** WFF combines State and private contributions to provide multiyear funding for service enriched housing. Since its inception in 2004, the state has invested \$6 million in WFF, which has been matched by private contributions.

**THE LOW INCOME HOME ENERGY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM (LIHEAP):** helps low-income families and individuals who are faced with the loss of heat in their homes.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

##### WSSC SUPPORTS:

- Maintaining funding for the Housing Trust Fund at the \$200 million level
- Targeting investments within the HTF to address the issues of communities of color
- Redirecting the State's housing efforts toward reducing poverty
- Increases to the THOR and WFF programs in recognition of the growing numbers of families and individuals in need of housing and supports due to the economic downturn
- Increasing support of LIHEAP