WSCC 2010 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 the poverty level, 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 Legislature provided $100 million for the HTF in the 2009-2011 budget, cutting in half the previously appropriated funding. This funding has already been spent, leaving the HTF at a zero balance with many low-income housing projects still pending. Advocates will work to restore funding.

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. Unfortunately, it has already been cut and could be eliminated in the supplemental budget.

WASHINGTON FAMILIES FUND (WFF): WFF combines state and private contributions to provide multiyear funding for services necessary for residents to maintain themselves and their homes. Since its inception in 2004, the state has invested $6 million in WFF, which has been matched by private contributions. In this year's significant budget cuts, it is likely that reduction or elimination of the state's portion of this program will be proposed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

WSCC SUPPORTS:

- Restoring funding for the Housing Trust Fund
- Targeting investments within the HTF to address the issues of communities of concern and veterans
- Redirecting the state's housing efforts toward reducing poverty
- Maintaining the THOR and WFF programs