

Weekly Legislative Update: **Housing and Homelessness**

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In the first week of this legislative session, a large number of bills were introduced and many public hearings were already scheduled in both the House and Senate Housing Committees. Summaries of these bills follow. None require action this week, although several are scheduled for public hearing. They will be noted for reader action in subsequent weeks.

There are three bills, however, described in the Growth Management weekly update, that are housing related and for which your action would be helpful. Please see that update [here](#).

Bill Descriptions

[HB 1042](#) Concerning the use of existing buildings for residential purposes, would prohibit cities from imposing certain restrictions or requirements on new housing units constructed within an existing building that is located in a zone that permits multifamily housing. These include density, parking and other.

[HB 1046](#) Expanding housing supply by supporting the ability of public housing authorities to finance affordable housing developments by re-benchmarking area median income limits. This increases the area median income limits on a public housing authority financed, low-income housing development to 80 percent, making affordable housing accessible to a larger population that in spite of higher income levels is challenged to find housing they can afford.

[HB 1054](#) Addressing the authority of owners' associations in common interest communities to regulate or limit occupancy by unrelated persons, would prohibit an association of unit owners in a common interest community from regulating or limiting the number of unrelated persons that may occupy a unit.

[HB 1070](#) Exempting the sale and leaseback of property by a seller from the residential landlord-tenant act when the seller agrees to a written lease at closing. This would allow the buyer to allow the seller to remain living in the home for up to six months if there is a written agreement between the buyer and seller.

[HB 1074](#) Addressing documentation and processes governing landlords' claims for damage to residential premises, increases tenant protection from landlord abuse of damage deposits and claims. It would require a landlord to substantiate the cost of any damages withheld from a tenant deposit with repair estimates, invoices, or other documentation; prohibit a landlord from withholding any portion of a tenant deposit for certain items; and establish a one-year statute of limitations for a landlord to take any action against a tenant to recover sums exceeding the amount of the damage deposit. It would also provide the landlord with additional time to provide such documentation.

[HB 1111](#) Concerning housing benefit districts. This bill provides local governments with more options to increase residential capacity, especially in urban areas, by authorizing cities to establish housing benefit

districts. These districts would be governed by a board and would be allowed to acquire, through land banking, predevelopment contracting, selling, improving, funding, and leasing, land for the development of affordable housing for low-income and moderate-income households within an area a half-mile or less from a major transit stop and is zoned for average minimum density of 15 dwelling units per acre or more.

[HB 1124](#) Protecting tenants from excessive rent and related fees by providing at least six months' notice for rent increases over a certain amount. This bill would require between 180- and 220-days' notice of rent increases that exceed five percent. It would address recent egregious rent increases that have forced people to move because they could not afford the increase and give tenants subject to such increases more time to plan and organize their necessary responses.

[HB 1129](#) Concerning the sale or lease of manufactured/mobile home communities and the property on which they sit. This bill would add protection for manufactured/mobile home owners when the land they rent is sold and they are vulnerable to having to move.

[SB 5045](#) Incentivizing rental of accessory dwelling units to low-income households, would allow counties to provide a property tax exemption for an accessory dwelling unit if certain conditions are met for as long as it is rented to a low-income household.

[SB 5060](#) Requiring the registration of rental and vacant housing units, would require landlords to register their rental units with Department of Commerce, thereby providing a method of tracking and reporting rental rates across the state.

[SB 5118](#) Concerning modifying the multifamily property tax exemption to promote development of long-term affordable housing. This bill would create a new 99-year property tax exemption for properties that commit to renting or selling at least 35 percent of the multifamily housing square footage as affordable housing to low- and moderate-income households.

[SB 5197](#) Addressing landlord-tenant relations by providing technical changes to eviction notice forms and modifying certain eviction processes. This bill would add to tenant protection in eviction proceedings.

[SB 5279](#) Expanding a sales and use tax deferral program for affordable housing to include structures initially used as temporary employee housing for employees constructing warehouses, distribution centers, and other large facilities. The League will watch this bill. Tax benefits are typically used to encourage certain policies for statewide benefit. It is not clear that the benefit of this proposal outweighs the tax obligation.

[SB 5301](#) Concerning housing programs administered by the department of commerce, would authorize the Housing Trust Fund administered by the Department of Commerce to support low-income residents in new ways.

How You Can Be Involved

- Respond to Action Alerts in the legislative newsletter. These will primarily appear in the section of the newsletter related to housing and homelessness.
- Join the League's Housing Affinity Group by contacting Cynthia Stewart, cstewart@lwvwa.org.

- Work with your local jurisdiction to assure that comprehensive planning will address the housing needs of your community. Contact your city or county planning department to obtain a comp plan development schedule and opportunities for engagement.