2020 STATE POLICY AGENDA

Each year, the Healthy Living Collaborative of Southwest Washington identifies a policy agenda based on input from its broad coalition of community stakeholders. Recommendations for 2020 seek to address a range of issues that influence health and wellness in Southwest Washington. The following items are not listed in order of priority.

Active Policy Advocacy:

- Integrate behavioral health specialists into early care and early learning (including mental health and substance use disorder support).

- Advance timely and equitable access to behavioral health services (including mental health and substance use disorder support) grounded in best practices by ensuring that Medicaid rates are sufficient to support competitive salaries. Prioritize treatment codes that will increase access for children and youth.

- Increase Working Connections Child Care rates so that more programs can provide quality child care for more vulnerable children and families.

- Bring wages for child care educators up to parity with kindergarten teachers via an early childhood education pay scale to reduce turnover.

- Support the $10 Million Housing Trust Fund appropriation for preservation of affordable homes. This would be specifically for the preservation of affordable homes already subsidized but at risk of loss (vs. for acquisition of nonsubsidized buildings). This wouldn't be limited to Housing Trust Fund investments, but to all units at risk of loss including USDA properties in more rural areas of Washington.

- Require move-in fee installment payment plans over 3 months if a tenant requests it (HB 1694, Rep. Morgan). The Washington Low Income Housing Alliance completed a listening tour and survey, where they heard many testimonials about how impossible it is to exit homelessness due to the extraordinary cost of getting into housing. HB 1694 does not regulate fees, but it allows a tenant to request a three-month payment plan for all the move in fees, deposit and first/last months’ rent.

- Mandate and fund a work group for school-based health centers in WA state, which will meet in 2020 and propose legislation in 2021.