

King County Aging Network

2021 State Legislative Priorities

Protect and Strengthen Our Communities for the Future

Our state and region thrive when people of all ages actively participate in their communities, and have equitable access to opportunities, and everyone is treated with respect, regardless of their age or ability.

We need your help to ensure that communities in our state are “age-friendly”—places that enable people of all ages and abilities to achieve their potential.

You can help by supporting:

- 1 Affordable and accessible housing and transportation options.**
- 2 Meaningful opportunities for employment, a safe and secure retirement system, and affordable healthcare for all life stages.**
- 3 A strong system of community-based supports for family caregivers, older adults, and people with disabilities, including dementia and Alzheimer’s.**

Washington leads the states on many of these issues, including the quality of our long-term services and supports system—ranked 2nd in the nation for quality and cost effectiveness. However, critical maintenance was neglected during the recession, and **revenue is needed** to ensure that the system can effectively respond to our state’s growing older population.

You can help by supporting ongoing efforts across the state to strengthen and sustain this system, such as the work of the Joint Legislative Committee on Aging and Disability and local approaches to transform our state’s health care system.

On the next page, we have listed opportunities for the Washington State Legislature to strengthen the Aging Network in 2021. These priorities were developed in collaboration with the Washington Association of Area Agencies on Aging and Washington Senior Lobby.

If you would like information specific to your legislative district, contact ADS Advisory Council staff liaison Sariga Santhosh at 206-379-3851 or Sariga.Santhosh@seattle.gov.



Seattle-King County Advisory Council on Aging & Disability Services
www.agingkingcounty.org

What you can do to strengthen Washington State's Aging Network



Revenue

Increase funding for vital human services programs

Support stronger safety nets and essential human services programs by investing in progressive revenue that keep money flowing through our communities. Washington State has the most regressive tax code in the nation – the poorest residents pay nearly six times their income in taxes than the wealthiest families.



Community Supports

Protect the Medicaid Case Management Program that keeps communities safe

Ranked #2 in the country by AARP, Washington State's Medicaid long-term care system has saved the state \$3 billion-plus over 15 years by enabling people to receive care in the lowest cost setting - their homes. As a global pandemic lingers and caseloads of clients with complex physical and behavioral health challenges increase, we should reject harmful cuts that come with a big human cost.



Tech and Connectivity

Invest in digital equity to ensure all people are healthy and connected

Older adults, particularly those on fixed income, are less likely to have at-home access to computers, tablets, and internet service. The digital divide, exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, highlights a need for affordable and accessible broadband and technology options. Invest in solutions that promote telehealth visits, distance learning, civic engagement, and social connections for isolated older adults.



Housing

Expand affordable housing and protections

Lack of affordable housing is already a critical issue facing our community. The pandemic and the economic downturn have pushed the housing crisis over the edge. An estimated 190,000 - 300,000 households in Washington State are unable to pay rent and at risk of eviction by January 2021. Now more than ever, we need investments to the Housing Trust Fund and stronger protections to keep low-income families, older adults, people with disabilities, and veterans safely and stably sheltered.



Prescription Costs

Lower costs of lifesaving prescription drugs

Americans pay among the highest drug prices in the world and often skip filling vital prescriptions to pay rent, buy food and afford other critical essentials. High costs disproportionately impact older adults over 50 and individuals living with manageable chronic health conditions like diabetes and high blood pressure. We need sensible legislation that improves access to life-saving prescription drugs and saves lives.



AgingKingCounty.org