



STATE OF WASHINGTON
— OFFICE OF GOVERNOR BOB FERGUSON —

EXECUTIVE ORDER 25-12

DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING TASK FORCE

WHEREAS, Washington strives to ensure all residents have access to affordable, safe, and robust housing options for people at all income levels; and

WHEREAS, Washington's growing population exceeded 8.1 million people in 2025, and this growth has put a strain on the state's existing housing supply and affordability; and

WHEREAS, nearly half of all renters in the state face high cost burdens, paying more than 30% of their annual gross income on housing costs, with one quarter paying more than 50% of their annual gross income on housing costs; and

WHEREAS, lack of affordable housing available to those making the lowest incomes remains the primary driver of housing insecurity and homelessness; and

WHEREAS, recent data demonstrates that all racial and ethnic communities across Washington have significant portions of their populations who are cost burdened by high housing costs, indicating that the housing affordability crisis affects every demographic group in this state; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Department of Commerce projects the need to build more than 1 million homes statewide by 2044, with half of those being affordable to Washingtonians making 50% of the area median income and below; and

WHEREAS, in Executive Order 25-02, I directed each executive and small cabinet agency to propose the streamlining of rules and regulations along with other proposed changes in order to speed up housing construction in our state; and

WHEREAS, in Washington, the concept of a cabinet-level agency dedicated to housing has been introduced legislatively and subsequently studied in a report issued in December of 2024; and

WHEREAS, the housing crisis demands a cabinet-level agency primarily focused on meeting the diverse housing needs of all Washingtonians; and

WHEREAS, Washington needs a more centralized, data-driven approach to integrate housing programs, promote housing stability, encourage housing growth and innovation, minimize administrative bottlenecks, and improve accountability by establishing a cabinet-level housing agency; and

WHEREAS, making large, structural changes to state government takes careful planning and consideration of fiscal costs, impacts on staff, goals of programmatic reform, impacts on the ongoing work performed by existing agencies, performance indicators, and timeframes;

NOW THEREFORE, I, Bob Ferguson, Governor of the state of Washington, hereby create the Washington State Task Force on the establishment of a Department of Housing.

1. The Task Force shall consist of nineteen members:
 - a. Ten members will be appointed by the Governor:
 - i. Two representatives of the Office of the Governor;
 - ii. Three representatives of the Department of Commerce, one of whom shall be the Director or the Director's designee;
 - iii. The Director of the Office of Financial Management or the Director's designee;
 - iv. The Executive Director of the Washington State Housing Finance Commission or the Executive Director's designee;
 - v. The Lieutenant Governor or the Lieutenant Governor's designee; and
 - vi. Two representatives of federally recognized tribes with rights and interests in Washington State who are elected leaders from their respective tribes, or designees of those elected leaders.
 - b. Two members may be appointed by the Speaker of the House of Representatives, one legislator from each of the two largest caucuses of the House of Representatives. Two members may be appointed by the President of the Senate, one legislator from each of the two largest caucuses of the Senate.
 - c. Three members will be representatives, respectively, of the Association of Washington Counties, the Association of Washington Cities, and the Association of Washington State Housing Authorities.
 - d. Two members will be representatives, respectively, of Washington's non-profit housing development sector (to be nominated at the discretion of their state and local associations) and Washington's for-profit housing development sector (to be nominated at the discretion of their state and local associations).

The Governor's Office will request that each appointing authority nominate their representative prior to the first meeting of the Task Force. All members shall serve at the pleasure of their appointing authority.

2. The Task Force shall have a Chair, who will be nominated by the Governor from the individuals appointed under section (a) above and confirmed at the first meeting of the Task Force by all appointees to the Task Force. The Chair shall develop a work plan, set the agenda, and provide leadership and direction for the Task Force.

3. A quorum for the Task Force meetings shall consist of a majority of the members. The Task Force shall make recommendations on an affirmative vote of the majority of its members.
4. The Task Force shall recommend a clear mission and vision for the new Department of Housing that will include the goals of:
 - a. Serving as the state’s coordinating, problem-solving, and implementation hub for expanding housing supply across Washington;
 - b. Unifying state programs and local assistance efforts focused on land use and acquisition, housing production, infrastructure alignment, and permitting reform;
 - c. Expanding the supply of housing of all types—affordable, workforce, middle, and market-rate—by removing barriers, modernizing processes, offering new financial tools and incentives, supporting new and innovative construction methodologies, and focusing state investments where they will yield the greatest results;
 - d. Building pathways to stable housing for Washingtonians at risk of becoming unhoused, and ensuring that state housing support expenditures and programs are effective;
 - e. Protecting critical and threatened natural and cultural resources that could be impacted by housing development;
 - f. Focusing on action and measurable outcomes, to ensure that more homes are permitted, financed, and built in this state over the next decade; and
 - g. Ensuring that the new Department of Housing will comply with applicable legal requirements and effectively manage non-state funding sources.
5. The Task Force shall produce a written report of its recommendations for a new cabinet-level housing agency no later than November 15, 2026, in order for proposed legislation to be developed for the 2027 legislative session.

The Task Force report shall include the following elements:

- a. Recommended new organizational and governance structures, including which existing agencies, administrations, commissions, or other functions of state government should be included within the new Department of Housing;
- b. A comprehensive operational plan outlining the services, programs, and processes of the new housing agency, including workflows, staffing needs, and resource allocation;
- c. Identification of steps to improve the administration of Washington’s existing continuum of affordable housing and homeless programs and services;
- d. Estimated costs for the reorganization, including technological needs, software, and capital and operating data management systems;
- e. A clear process and timeline for the reorganization, including the involvement of regional management and program-delivery staff; and
- f. Measurable benchmarks by which the effectiveness of the new Department of Housing would be assessed.

In developing its report, the Task Force may form workgroups and consult with experts in organizational restructuring, housing policy, and others whose expertise the Task Force deems necessary for informing its work.

6. The Task Force shall work with the Governor's Office of Indian Affairs (GOIA) to conduct tribal consultation in alignment with Executive Order 25-10 and incorporate feedback in the Task Force report.
7. Using existing resources, the Task Force may hire an independent consultant to solicit community engagement, co-lead other facilitation efforts, maintain records of the Task Force process, and draft the final written report.
8. The Office of the Governor, the Department of Commerce, and the Office of Financial Management may provide staff support for the Task Force. The Governor's Office may request additional staff support from other agencies, departments, or branches of state government, including, but not limited to, the Washington State Housing Finance Commission.
9. If the Task Force requires assistance or non-privileged data from any cabinet agency, then such cabinet agency shall provide assistance or data to the Task Force upon request.
10. The first meeting of the Task Force shall take place no later than 60 days after this Executive Order is signed.

This Executive Order shall be implemented consistent with applicable law. Provisions of this Order are not intended to alter any existing collective bargaining agreements. This Order is not intended to confer and does not confer any legal right or entitlement and shall not be used as a basis for legal challenges to any rule or any other action or inaction of the governmental entities and employees subject to it.

This Order shall take effect immediately.

Signed and sealed with the official seal of the state of Washington on this 18th day of December, AD, Two Thousand and Twenty-Five, at Seattle, Washington.

By:

/s/

Bob Ferguson
Governor

BY THE GOVERNOR:

/s/
Secretary of State