



STATE OF WASHINGTON

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR

P.O. Box 40002 • Olympia, Washington 98504-0002 • (360) 753-6780 • www.governor.wa.gov

February 20, 2006

TO: Juli Wilkerson, Director
Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development

FROM: Christine O. Gregoire

SUBJECT: ESTABLISHING A STATE INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness is a complicated social problem with many contributing factors that include lack of affordable housing and living-wage employment opportunities, oftentimes family violence, and health-related issues, such as mental illness and substance abuse. While many dedicated individuals, community and faith-based organizations, and government agencies work hard to combat homelessness in our state, this issue, unfortunately, remains a serious concern.

Last year, the Washington State Legislature passed ESSHB 2163 – also known as the Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act – that I signed into law. Among other important activities, the bill requires the state to develop a 10-year homeless housing strategic plan, with annual progress reports to the Legislature, and designated the Department of Community, Trade and Economic Development (CTED) as the lead agency.

The Legislature also envisioned active partnering by six other state agencies: the Department of Corrections (DOC), Health (DOH), Social and Health Services (DSHS), Veterans Affairs (DVA), the Employment Security Department (ESD), and the Office of Financial Management (OFM). In signing this bill, I asked each of the seven agencies to designate a senior staff person to serve as lead on homelessness issues for their agency. I understand you have designated Stephen Buxbaum, Assistant Director for Housing, in this lead role for CTED.

To create an appropriate forum for the cross-agency coordination, collaboration and planning necessary to implement the state's responsibilities under the Homelessness Housing and Assistance Act, I am asking CTED to convene and manage a state Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH).

Other senior staff designated by their agencies for ICH participation have now been identified:

- Blake Chard, Deputy Secretary, DSHS
- Kathryn (Kit) Bail, Assistant Deputy Secretary for OMNI Business Unit, DOC
- Alfie Alvarado-Ramos, Deputy Director, DVA

Juli Wilkerson
February 20, 2006
Page 2

- Peggy Zimmerman, Acting Assistant Commissioner for Human Resources and Services Division, ESD
- Mary Looker, Manager for Primary Care Office, DOH
- Theo Yu, Senior Budget Assistant, OFM

I will be contacting each of the agency directors to let them know that I have asked CTED to convene the Council, to request their designee serve as the agency representative on the Council, and that CTED will be contacting them shortly with additional details. If you have any questions, please contact Kari Burrell in my Executive Policy Office at (360) 902-0645 or kari.burrell@gov.wa.gov.

I am aware that developing an effective plan to end homelessness is no small task. Thank you in advance for your hard work and commitment to this very important effort.

cc: Steve Buxbaum, Assistant Director of Housing, CTED
Tom Fitzsimmons, Chief of Staff, Office of the Governor
Kari Burrell, Executive Policy Advisor, Office of the Governor