

## **Statement of Purpose**

I am advocating fervently on behalf of the homeless. My intent and purpose is to shine a light on homelessness, how it affects all of us and a way in which we can eradicate this very public and private issue. Homelessness is characterized as being caused by factors, such as; lack of housing, mental illness, lack of job opportunities and poverty.

Homelessness isn't someone else's problem. Its ripple effect touches an entire community. Homelessness is a social issue due to the failure of society to ensure that adequate systems, funding and support are in place so that all people have access to housing.

According to the 2022 census count for the homeless, in Washington State, there are 25,211 homeless individuals and families, a 10% increase since 2020. In Tacoma and Pierce county there are 1850. In 2022, the Washington State legislature invested more than \$800 million dollars in programs to address homelessness.

While residents of Washington State are being told that there is a lack of housing to house the homeless, there are 255,000 vacant properties in Washington State alone. There is an increase in vacant homes in Tacoma. There is a 4.4 percent increase in vacant apartments in Tacoma since 2019 and the homeless are living in encampments, parks and on the streets.

In Pierce County the homeless population is made up of 31% mentally ill, 24% chronically homeless and 17% have a substance abuse problem. The mentally ill are described as having Affective disorders, such as; depression, anxiety and bi-polar disease. All of these disorders can be managed with successful results given the proper medications, stability and ongoing support.

I have designed a 4 year plan that I believe will eradicate homelessness. My plan incorporates stable housing, job training, parenting skills, healthcare, banking skills and personal growth.

Allow me to begin with housing the severely mentally ill.

By placing the severely mentally ill in a permanent facility, instead of a temporary one, this will not only cut down on the number of homeless to house but it will prevent them from becoming homeless again. The lack of treatment for the seriously mentally ill causes the kind of delusions and bizarre behavior that makes living alone or at home with families untenable. As a result, many people with serious mental illness become homeless and communities are forced to bear the cost of that. As for the remaining homeless population with more treatable mental illnesses and the chronically homeless, they can easily be housed with the allocated funds that Washington State has put forth to combat homelessness and the number of homes/apartments presently vacant.

The first year would consist of obtaining healthcare, for both their physical and mental welfare. Being on the street without proper health care can cause serious health issues. This year will also allow the homeless to obtain proper documents, such as; Social Security cards and birth certificates. Education and personal growth will also be offered throughout the entire program. Should there be a need for remedial education or to obtain a G.E.D that too will be offered. Tacoma Community College offers Basic Education and a G.E.D program that is available for everyone.

The second year will consist of job training. There are several entities that are available for job training, good pay and benefits. The Tacoma Police Department has only 334 sworn officers in their department. At any given time there are only 20 officers on the street. TPD is suffering such a shortage that they are offering sign up bonuses of \$25,000. It takes 4-5 months of training

to become a Tacoma Police Officer. Housing is not afforded to the trainees during training so having a home will alleviate that stress for them. The average pay rate for a Tacoma Police Officer is \$92,469 a year. Now, that will help someone keep a modest home.

A Nursing degree is another avenue that one can attain. In the State of Washington it takes 2 years to become an ADN (Associate degree in Nursing). An ADN makes \$36.35 per hour on average. The Organic Farm School is located on Whidbey Island, they offer paid tuition, 7 months of training on not only how to become a farmer, they also teach you how to run a small to moderate business.

The third year will consist of working and learning banking skills. The homeless will learn how to open a bank account, balance an account and save money. They will learn how to save enough money every month in order to put that money saved on next year's rent. In doing so, this will always keep them on stable footing and in stable housing.

The fourth year will include their decision to move into a home of their own. I'm sure that society would much rather live near Police officers, Nurses and Farmers rather than having them live on the street. This will not only help the community but it will also help the economy.

I believe strongly in all of the core values of the Mission and Philosophy of The Evergreen State College MPA program. I want to think critically and creatively to imagine new possibilities for a positive change. I love the possibility of working collaboratively and effectively with others to reach a common goal of ending homelessness. I, indeed, value fairness and equality. The Evergreen State College believes in reaching back into the community to uplift it and I agree with that. I believe that The Evergreen State College MPA program (Public and Nonprofit Administration) will teach me how to bring this passion of mine to end homelessness to fruition.

