



Yakima County Health Care Coalition

August 4, 2021

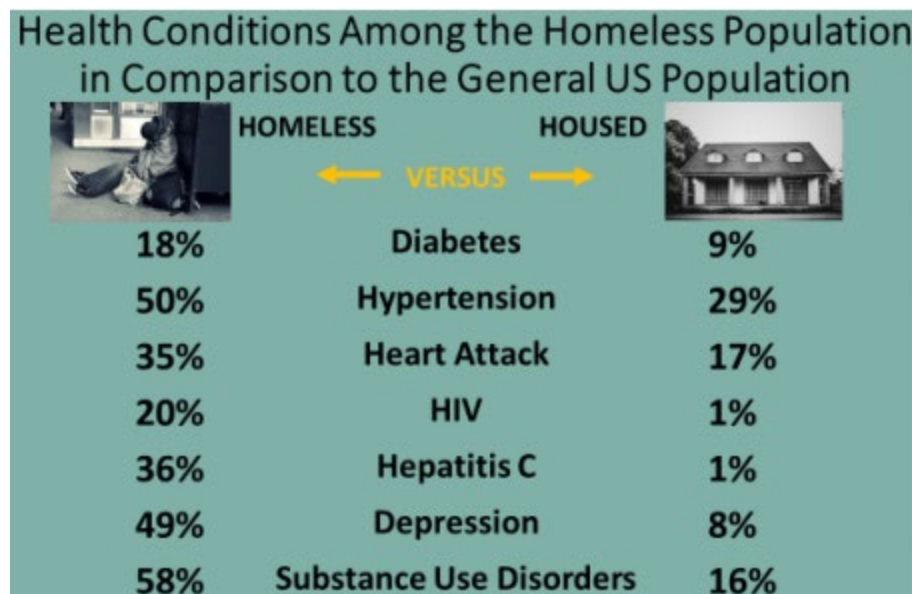
To our Public Policy Makers:

The Yakima County Health Care Coalition's mission is to advocate for the health care needs of the people of Yakima County. Our priority is to assure services are available to the disproportionate share of the state's Medicaid population living in Yakima County. Our members represent a broad sector including primary care, hospitals, social services, transportation, education, health workforce, philanthropy, and housing – providers and consumers .

The members signed below are excited about the opportunity created by **House Bill 1590**, to increase affordable housing in Yakima County. HB 1590 allows County and City officials the authority to apply a 1/10th of 1% sales tax (no tax on food) for affordable housing and behavioral health treatment. This would be a cost to residents of Yakima of **one penny for every \$10.00 spent (again, not on food)**.

Both our County Commissioners and the Yakima City Council have recently reviewed analysis of the housing markets in our communities. It is well recognized we have a lack of affordable housing in our communities, particularly for low income, and very low income individuals and families.

Safe and affordable housing is important for all residents of Yakima County, and no more critical for people experiencing homelessness. While health care providers do all we can to mitigate the effects of living without a home, no amount of health care can substitute for stable housing. According to the National Health Care for the Homeless' Health Center Patient Survey, the disparities are remarkable:



Our coalition members who serve People Experiencing Homelessness can attest to the health care improvements when a person has stable housing. **Housing IS Health Care.**



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Additionally, the average cost nationally to public systems (Emergency Rooms, EMS System, fire, law and justice) of an unsheltered person is over \$40,000 annually. Housing with supportive services is less than half the cost, and results in better health for the individual, and ultimately better quality of life for our communities.

If the Affordable Housing Tax is passed in Yakima County, this could generate approximately \$4 million annually for our county. If passed by the City of Yakima, \$2 million annually. If matched with other state or federal resources, Yakima would be well on our way to meeting the housing crisis in our communities. We have talented developers and service providers excited to partner in these efforts.

We strongly urge the adoption of the 1/10th of 1% sales tax to promote Affordable Housing in Yakima.

Sincerely,

Yakima County Health Care Coalition organizations and members:

Rhonda Hauff, CEO , Yakima Neighborhood Health Services

Dan Ferguson, MS, Director, Washington State Allied Health Center of Excellence

Angela Gonzalez, CEO, Community Health of Central Washington

Brian P. Gibbons, Jr. , President and CEO, Astria Health

Juan Carlos Olivares, CEO, Yakima Valley Farm Workers Clinic

Community Health Plan of Washington

Tom Gaulke, CEO, Entrust Community Services

Darlene Darnell, President and CEO, Catholic Charities

Sharon F. Miracle, President and CEO, Yakima Valley Community Foundation

Carol Moser, Executive Director, Greater Columbia Accountable Community of Health

Triumph Treatment Services



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