Resolution in Support of City of Bellingham Initiative No. 2025-03, Regarding Tenants' Rights

Whereas, approximately 70% of Western Washington University students live off campus.[1]

Whereas, Western Washington University values the constitutional right to speech, assembly, and association free from retaliation as these rights are protected by law and are fundamental to the democratic process, learning, scholarly inquiry, and creative activity.[2]

Whereas, student tenants face barriers to these freedoms in repressive rental agreement provisions, intimidation, and retaliation; and

Whereas, fear of retaliation deters student tenants from reporting unsafe and unhealthy housing conditions[3], undermining student health and safety as it impacts attendance, performance, and success.

Whereas, Bellingham's housing expenses are 40% higher than the national average[4], and the shortage of safe and affordable housing disproportionately affects financially insecure student tenants, who already have the burden of paying for school.

Whereas, existing state protections against retaliation under the Residential Landlord Tenant Act are limited and do not protect the rights of tenants to free speech, assembly, and association.

Whereas, a lack of First Amendment protections has made it more difficult for student tenants to reside in Bellingham, which works against Western's goals of student retention, enrollment, and graduation.

Whereas, Initiative No. 2025-03 states that no landlord shall interfere with or prohibit any rights of tenants to speech, assembly and association.

Whereas, Initiative No. 2025-03 states that no landlord shall retaliate against a tenant because of their education of and encouragement to exercise legal tenant rights, or their engagement in political speech and political organizing.

Whereas, Initiative No. 2025-03 states that no rental agreement shall include provisions that waive tenants' rights or otherwise violate this initiative.

***Now Therefore Be It Resolved* that the Associated Students of Western Washington University:**

1. **THAT,** the ASWWU Executive Board adopts this resolution to express its official position in support to Initiative No. 2025-03 concerning residential landlord tenant relations and protection of the freedoms of speech, assembly, and association for tenants free from retaliation.

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[1] **U.S. News & World Report.** "Western Washington University Student Life." *U.S. News Best Colleges*, https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges/western-washington-3802/student-life. Accessed 10 Oct. 2025.

[2] **Western Washington University.** *Guide to Expressive Activities at Western*. Western Washington University, https://www.wwu.edu/expressive-activities. Accessed 14 Oct. 2025

[3] **Showalter, Rachel.** "Bellingham affordable housing tenants speak out about conditions, safety concerns at complex. The Bellingham Heral, McClatchy, 17 October 2023. https://www.bellinghamherald.com/news/local/article279792509.html. Accessed 10 Oct. 2025

[4] **PayScale.** "Cost of Living in Bellingham, Washington." *PayScale*, https://www.payscale.com/cost-of-living-calculator/Washington-Bellingham. Accessed 10 Oct. 2025.

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