



Campaign for Tenant Safety: Everyone Has a Right to a safe 'Bellinghome'

We Want: *Proactive Bellingham city ordinances to inspect and register all rental properties to ensure they are safe to live in.*

Why: Many tenants in Bellingham live in homes with health or safety code violations. These violations represent an immediate threat to the lives of tenants and their neighbors. Some landlords fail to comply with their duties and do not respond to requests from their tenants. The current *Complaint-based System* which tenants must bring official complaints to the city to inspect rental properties is flawed because tenants fear retribution from their landlords and furthermore, many renters cannot recognize structural or electrical code violations.

Proactive City Ordinances: Defined as code enforcement programs that local governments implement to ensure the safety and welfare of their citizens. Rental units are registered with the city and then are inspected on a periodic basis to ensure that they are safe and habitable. Proactive rental programs also often implement education programs for tenants and landlords to learn about their rights and responsibilities.

Legal Support: Washington Law grants local city governments to institute inspection and registration programs.

- Washington State [Senate Bill 6459](#) - "*Local municipalities may require that landlords provide a certificate of inspection as a business license condition.*"

Proactive Policies across Washington:

- Seattle - *Rental Registration and Inspection Ordinance* ([Seattle Municipal Code 22.214](#))
- Tukwila - *Residential Rental Licensing & Inspection* ([Tukwila City Code 5.06](#))
- Pullman - *Residential Rental Property Registration* ([Pullman City Code 6.98](#))

Long Term Impacts of Proactive City Ordinances:

- Better health and safety of both renters and non-renters in the community,
- Improved relations between tenants and landlords,
- Improved communication between the City and Landlords trained on how to manage their properties more effectively,
- Improve the quality and safety of housing in Bellingham, raising property values and making Bellingham safer,

The End Goal: Enacting a Bellingham city ordinance requires a majority of city council members and the Mayor's signature. We will need to lobby city council members on the importance of this issue for student tenants and the Bellingham community. This issue has been brought forth before in city council, and by building a community coalition with many people in the community we can successfully get proactive city ordinances passed in Bellingham.

Therefore this campaign will have multiple components:

Off-Campus

- Circulate an official petition calling for proactive city ordinances
- Launch press releases to local media
- Meet with City Council Members and the Planning & Community Development Departments in the City Government
- Reach out to members in the community:
 - o Neighborhood Associations
 - o Local Non-Profits
 - o Health / Fire Department
 - o Landlord Associations
 - o Colleges
- Organize meetings so members of the public can meet together and discuss this issue
- Raise awareness of the dangers that tenants face in this community

On-Campus

- Raise awareness in the public through tabling, advertising, signs, banners, pins
- Continue the Campaign for Tenant Safety: Bellinghome organization through meetings that will be open to new volunteers
- Collect student stories e.g. *"My name is Sarah, I live on 21st St. and I have a broken window that my landlord has not repaired in two weeks"*
 - o With permission, go to student rentals to take photographs of issues
- Reach out to faculty and administration
- Organize Social Media
- Reach out to Student Publications
- Organize Public Events
 - o Legal Information Center Info
 - o Open-mic share stories
 - o Talk to on-campus dorm residents