

## Landlord-Tenant Reform in Bellingham

- **Washington State Law Title 59 RCW** establishes the rights and responsibilities of tenants and landlords in Bellingham.
- Some landlords in Bellingham violate their duties and endanger their tenants.
- Bellingham need new city ordinances passed to ensure that the law is enforced.
- Student renters are harmed:
  - **Physically** - Students live in homes that are violating of health and safety laws. Negligent landlord oversight of properties results in serious injury and suffering by student tenants.
  - **Financially** - Violations of Washington State Tenant Laws regarding rent and security deposits inappropriately places undue expenses on students,
  - **Psychologically** - Living in dangerous housing and dealing with negligent landlords harm students' wellbeing and impacts their transitions after WWU.
- Currently, many students do not know their rights, how to identify housing or safety violations, or who to contact for support.
- The current complaint-based system puts gratuitous pressure on the tenants to protect their rights and shifts the responsibility away from where it belongs: *on the landlord*.
- Our solution is to implement new policies to:
  - Require landlords to **register all their properties** with the Bellingham City Permit Center. Registrations to be kept on record and available to public,
  - Require rental properties to be **inspected by a professional** to check for health or safety hazards. Also respond to tenant requests,
  - Establish new **educational resources** for landlords and tenants to understand responsibilities and protections in the law.
  - Support **greater communication** between landlords, tenants, students, WWU, neighborhood associations, non-profits, and the city of Bellingham.
- The outcomes:
  - Better health and safety of renters in the community,
  - Improved relations between tenants and landlords,
  - Improve neighborhood safety and community in Bellingham.