

Resolution to protect renters and owners of manufactured homes from excessive and unfair fees, deposit requirements, and other charges

WHEREAS, more than half of Bellingham households are renter-occupied;

WHEREAS, more than [14 thousand Bellingham renters are cost-burdened, and at least 7,400 are severely cost-burdened](#);

WHEREAS, manufactured home parks comprise about [2.5% of Bellingham's total housing stock but represent 16% of the affordable housing](#);

WHEREAS, the National Consumer Law Center 2023 report, "[How Junk Fees Add to Skyrocketing Rent](#)", finds that excessive and unfair fees make quality and habitable rental housing harder to access and afford; and

WHEREAS, [nearly a third of all complaints](#) received by the Washington State Office of the Attorney General Manufactured Housing Dispute Resolution Program are cases are related to fees and utility charges; and

WHEREAS, renters locally experience fees and deposit requirements as high as:

- Security deposits more than double the monthly rent.
- \$750 pet deposits and \$50/month in pet fees (non-refundable).
- \$250 "holding" fees to move into a unit.
- \$200 "administrative" fee to sign a lease.
- \$85/month non-optional "tenant benefit packages".
- \$1,000 lease breaking fees, even after rent increases; and

WHEREAS, manufactured home owners report fees as high as:

- \$75/month to park a car on their own manufactured home lot.

- \$65 for a lease violation, such as children’s play equipment in their front yard.
- \$100 late fees and \$50 dishonored check fee.
- Water-sewer charges previously included in rent added to rent, on top of rent hikes; and

WHEREAS, costs during the housing search process, and at move-in and move-out, present significant barriers to maintaining access to housing; and

WHEREAS, the [2021 Zillow Consumer Housing Trends Report](#) finds that renters of color pay more application fees and are required to pay higher security deposits; and

WHEREAS, most pet owners pay an average [\\$244 in pet deposits, often non-refundable, and more than \\$600 annually in monthly pet fees](#), even though only 9% of pet-owning households cause any damage, and only 2% cause any damage that required any security deposit withholdings; and

WHEREAS, excessive, unfair, and/or undisclosed fees [add to the cost of housing and reduce consumer transparency](#), hiding and adding to the true cost of housing options; and

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED BY THE WHATCOM COUNTY DEMOCRATS:

That we call on the Bellingham City Council, Whatcom County Council, and Washington State Legislature to enact comprehensive and strong protections against unfair and excessive fees in manufactured housing communities and residential rental housing.

Adopted by unanimous vote at the August 24, 2024 General Membership Meeting of Whatcom Democrats