



CONTACT:

Margret Graham, Communications Manager
Washington Higher Education Facilities Authority
(206) 454-9058 - margret.graham@wshfc.org

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Steve Walker named executive director of state Housing Finance Commission and WHEFA

SEATTLE, Wash. – The Washington State Housing Finance Commission has named Steve Walker as its new executive director after a nationwide search. He will also direct the Washington Higher Education Facilities Authority (WHEFA), an affiliate agency to the Commission.

Walker returns to the Commission, where he was director of Multifamily Housing and Community Facilities until 2013, after most recently leading the City of Seattle Office of Housing.

“To lead an organization I know so well, where the work, the vision and the values are aligned with my own commitment to housing stability, is exciting,” Walker said.

“We had a good pool of candidates from across the country, and Steve was the best choice to lead us into the future,” said Karen Miller, chair of the Housing Finance Commission.

Walker will step into the shoes of founding director Kim Herman, who retires this year after 36 years at the helm of the Commission and 23 years leading WHEFA.

Walker has dedicated his 30-year career to affordable housing and community development, beginning with homeless housing in New York City. He then directed housing programs for a nonprofit in his native northern California before coming to Seattle.

In 1996, Walker joined the Washington State Housing Finance Commission and eventually became director of the Multifamily Housing and Community Facilities division, overseeing the financing of affordable apartments, nonprofit facilities, and many other projects benefitting families and communities statewide.

He was appointed by Seattle Mayor Ed Murray in 2014 to lead the city’s housing strategies and investments, including Seattle’s largest voter-approved Housing Levy to date. Walker served during a time of rapid growth marked by skyrocketing housing costs, displacement, and homelessness. He was reappointed by Mayor Durkan in 2018 and left the post earlier this year.

As executive director of the Commission and WHEFA, Walker will oversee the financing of affordable apartments, home loans, and many other projects, as well as facilities for Washington nonprofit colleges and universities, using tax-exempt bonds and other financing tools.

“The reputation of the Commission in Washington state and across the nation, my passion for providing affordable housing for those most in need, and the opportunity to advance racial and social equity objectives are among the many reasons I am enthusiastic to take on this role,” Walker said.

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Since 1983, the **Washington Higher Education Facilities Authority** (www.whefa.org) has helped the state’s private, nonprofit colleges and universities to access more than \$2.2 billion in tax-exempt financing for projects such as student housing, academic and administrative buildings, sports and music facilities, and computer systems. WHEFA’s ability to obtain lower interest rates through the sale of tax-exempt bonds has saved Authority borrowers millions of dollars. The savings ultimately benefit the students of Washington State and supports the mission of the institutions. The Authority receives no regular state funding for its operations and accomplishes its work without taxpayer funding of any kind.

