

U.S. Senator Maria Cantwell

Casa de la Mora Dedication Ceremony in Yakima

August 12, 2026

Sen. Cantwell Remarks

[VIDEO]

Sen. Cantwell: Well, thank you so much for the invitation, and it's great to be here in Yakima. Great to be with such a distinguished group of people, and great to see solutions that are making a difference in people's lives. I don't know if I can add to what's already been said. It's been so beautiful so far.

I do want to recognize Mayor Matt Brown, obviously Bishop Tyson. I don't know that you could have done a better speech talking about dignity and the dignity of housing, and why it's so important for us to make this investment, but thank you.

I got involved in this [federal Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)] program probably 20 [years ago]. I don't know, maybe 2008? But I was in Ballard, Washington, looking and touring at a project that wasn't done, and I saw a homeless man on the corner, and he said with pride, "See that unit up there? That's going to be mine."

And you realize that this is changing lives, and that it is the transformative element that might get somebody from just existing to thriving again. So I want to thank Catholic Charities for that, and Manuel couldn't give a better rendition about what hope means and why hope is so important in this equation, because that's really what happens to these families.

I've met so many people across the United States of America, [including] women who've been the subject of domestic violence and didn't know how to get out of it, [who] basically found a roof over their head so they can change [and] transform their lives.

I've seen projects in Spokane, also [with] Catholic Charities involved, where previously homeless couples [who] literally [had a] tragedy and a downturn in an economy separate them, and they no longer could even afford to live together.

I saw a housing project reunite them and give their kids a chance to go to school at Gonzaga Prep and on to Gonzaga University if they wanted. Talk about a housing project. That was one heck of a project.

So I just thank you for that hope and for Catholic Charities and for your leadership here in Central Washington and so many different projects that you've done. It's great to be here with Commissioner Linde and Commissioner Curtis, and also State Senator Curtis King, and of course our dear governor, who is doing so much.

The governor does so much work. I didn't realize he had made so many promises on housing, just on housing, but that's good. That's good because he and I are like-minded on this.

You know, we understand how critical this is to our state because we're a growing state, and everything in our state takes affordable housing if you want to have a job, if you want to be in that community, [and] if you want to be able to get those services.

So we can't do enough work on the supply of long-term housing for the state of Washington. So, Governor, thank you for that commitment. Thank you, thank you so much. And I echo the bishop's comments about protecting of immigrants.

Thank you so much for that. That is critical to our state. So housing is the foundation of our communities. Without that adequate supply, Washingtonians would continue to face rents and high prices that are increasingly out of reach.

We had a national study that was done just in the Virginia-D.C. area that basically said for every two thousand units that are not built, the annual rent goes up \$2,000. So when we don't build supply, we are just increasing everybody's rent, not just those who can afford it the least, but everybody else's in the community because we are thwarting supply.

For these individuals with disabilities, or who were previously homeless, or young adults in transition like [from] foster care, finding an affordable place to live is [an] even bigger challenge, and that is why this project is answering that by marrying up foster kids with an opportunity for their very own first home.

That is why I'm so glad to be here to help address these issues. We all know that it takes a lot of people, and I want to thank everybody here in the community who's participated in this project as well.

There is federal, state, local, and nonprofit partners as well as the private sector, and we've tried to do our job at the federal level by generating more than \$15 million in equity in this particular project, which [had] a total cost of \$32 million.

The federal tax credit is just one element of this project, and I'm proud to thank you for that rendition of what we've been trying to do at the federal level. Actually, in 2018 the tax code didn't work out so well. They had to fix it.

So we made sure that in that we fixed the low-income housing tax credit and had a bump for four years at 20 percent. And Kim Herman – people remember Kim Herman. He was successful at getting one of the first benefits of that money [for] a farmworker housing project here in the Yakima Valley.

So that was our first big attempt, and then just recently we've been able to get the 12 percent [increase in the state's LIHTC allocation made] permanent and [the lower] 25 percent bond [test]. For some reason, Governor, when we passed this bill – this is what you should study. Somehow, when we passed this bill, we basically said, "Oh, we don't know that anybody will do this, and so we want a very high bond test."

By lowering the bond test [and increasing allocation], we are going to help build 42,000 more units in the state of Washington over the next 10-year period of time. So, very, very, very, very proud of that.

And then, just recently, you might have heard of the 21st Century ROAD to Housing Bill that Elizabeth Warren just helped us pass, and it improves the wraparound services that these young people in the back are involved in that make these communities work so successfully, and helped to streamline the state and local regulations here so that we can move more affordable housing faster.

So, this Washington is standing out as a national leader in youth and youth-adult homelessness, and Casa de la Mora will be a brilliant example of that. From 2016 to 2023, Washington State saw [a] 40

percent reduction in youth and youth-adult homelessness, according to the Washington Department of Commerce's Office on Homelessness.

But despite these advancements, we've seen 14,000 young people remain unstably housed or homeless, which makes this development project so much more important.

It's going to show that real solutions exist in the community, and that those solutions not only help these young people, but they help our economy by creating a workforce and stability for them and their families.

So this development strives to permanently break the cycle of homelessness that especially affects young adults transitioning from foster care, and thanks to organizations like Catholic Charities Housing Services, Rod's House, [and] Yakima Neighbor Health Services, these families here will have access to services that will help them thrive.

So, thanks to everybody. Congratulations for this very, very important project. I hope there's many more like this. I'm excited for the rest of the community and the new residents of Casa de la Mora to really get on with their lives [and] to give us their best rendition of what's next after a roof over the head provides them more stability. Thank you all very much.