

Dear Seattle City Councilmembers and Mayor Burgess:

Nearly two years after the City of Seattle declared a Homelessness State of Emergency, the homelessness crisis continues to deepen with no end in sight. We, the undersigned, fear that the City's response to this crisis is inadequate and in some respects counterproductive. We believe Seattle can do better, and we call upon you, our elected officials, to lead the way.

To criminalize people for performing necessary life-sustaining activities in public spaces when there is no housing available to them is ineffective, costly and inhumane. The City is wasting scarce resources chasing people from place to place, disrupting their lives and making them more vulnerable. According to the City of Seattle 2016 Homeless Needs Assessment, 93% of people experiencing homelessness said they would move into housing were it affordable and accessible to them. We need housing, not sweeps.

We are also concerned that the city's pivot to short-term Rapid Re-Housing assistance will prove a poor investment, given the mounting evidence that short-term vouchers do not provide a reliable bridge to stable, permanent housing in high-rent, low-vacancy markets. We urge the city to not drain resources from successful shelter, service, and transitional housing programs that we know work, in order to gamble on an approach that has not been proven effective in our environment.

Attached is a platform detailing steps we believe must be taken to end the homelessness crisis. This fall, we urge our city leaders to begin by focusing on the following initial steps:

1. Step up the creation of deeply affordable housing.

- Seattle would have to quadruple HALA's ten-year goal of creating 6,000 units of housing affordable at 0-30% AMI, to meet the need for 27,481 such homes in 2030 projected by the Housing Development Consortium. We call upon you to formally recognize this huge gap and initiate a plan to address it, including the strategies outlined in our platform.

2. Support shelter at the scale of the crisis.

- 40% exits to permanent housing is not a realistic requirement for shelter providers in light of the severe shortage of affordable housing. Revisit the Homeless Investments RFP process to ensure that effective existing shelter is not lost, then prioritize increasing the quantity, quality and accessibility of shelter and services.

3. Reform City Policies on Unauthorized Encampments and Vehicle Residence.

- When unauthorized encampment sites are not irremediably unsafe or in conflict with other public uses, outreach and services should be provided in place when housing cannot be offered. For truly unsuitable sites, inform people of alternate nearby sites where they won't face removal.
- For vehicles that are being used as shelter, find alternatives to ticketing and towing that are non-punitive and don't create debt traps. Provide supportive services and establish safe parking areas for people living in vehicles.

We look forward to working with you this fall to protect the civil rights, dignity and safety of people experiencing homelessness as we move forward together with long-term and fundamental solutions to our region's affordable housing and homelessness crises.

Sincerely,

The Housing for All Coalition

Affordable Housing Alliance
Affordable Seattle
Ballard Community Taskforce on Homelessness and Hunger (BCTHH)
Cafe Red
Camp Second Chance
Columbia Legal Services
District 2 Neighborhood Action Council
District 3 Neighborhood Action Council
District 4 Neighborhood Action Council
District 5 Neighborhood Action Council
District 6 Neighborhood Action Council
District 7 Neighborhood Action Council
Economic Opportunity Institute
Gender Justice League

Housing Now Seattle
Interfaith Taskforce on Homelessness
Lake City Taskforce on Homelessness
Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI)
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
Nickelsville
Operation Nightwatch
Puget Sound Advocates for Retirement Action (PSARA)
Real Change
SAFE in Seattle
SeaTac Neighborhood Action Council
Seattle Community Law Center
Seattle Democratic Socialists of America
Seattle LGBTQ Commission

Seattle People's Party
Seattle Tech 4 Housing
Seattle Tech Solidarity
Seattle University School of Law Homeless Rights Advocate Project
SHARE (Seattle Housing and Resource Effort)
Socialist Alternative
Stevens Elementary PTA
Stop the Sweeps
Tech Workers Coalition
Tenants Union of Washington State
The Urbanist
Transit Riders Union
Washington Community Action Network
Westside Interfaith Network (WIN)
WHEEL (Women's Housing Equality and Enhancement League)

Cary Moon
Jon Grant
Teresa Mosqueda
Pat Murakami

Nikkita Oliver
Jessyn Farrell
Mike McGinn

... and many more to come.

