September 28, 2023

Seattle City Council
council@seattle.gov
600 4th Ave., 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Seattle City Council Members:

Renters now make up more than half of Seattle's population. In 2021, **only five fines were issued from the 3,285** complaints and questions filed by renters with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI), 0.15% of the total. This highlights a substantial contrast between the hardships experienced by renters and the repercussions experienced by landlords

Seattle has demonstrated its commitment to supporting workers' rights by creating the Seattle Office of Labor Standards (OLS), an agency that has statutory enforcement power to procure restitution and fines when workers' rights are violated. As renter and worker rights are inseparable, **the Seattle Renter Organizing Council (SROC) and the undersigned community organizations call on Seattle City Council to protect the health, well-being, and rights of Seattle's over 400,000 renters by committing to creating an Office of Renters' Rights Standards.**

By establishing an Office of Renters' Rights Standards, we can protect renters' rights to safe housing and justice through comprehensive investigations and robust enforcement mechanisms. This office could also leverage the insights from investigations and renters' experiences to identify areas of renters rights that remain unaddressed.

Seattle's housing affordability crisis continues to worsen, with wage stagnation and cost of living increases resulting in an ever-growing number of renters facing displacement or homelessness with just a missed paycheck or two. When landlords violate the rights of renters, including forcing them to pay for substandard or dangerous housing or else face eviction, our current system provides for no timely and just resolution.

For all those people who are still waiting for their landlords to fix problems with dangerous mold, lack of heat or water, pests, broken locks on doors, and so much more,

the time for this is well past due. Stand with the majority of Seattleites by committing to the creation of an Office of Renters' Rights Standards now.

Seattle has a proud history of championing workers' rights; it is time to extend that same level of protection to renters.

Sincerely,

Seattle Renter Organizing Council
350 Seattle
A Center for Restorative Solutions
Abundance of Hope Center
Asian Counseling and Referral Service
Be:Seattle
Black Star Farmers
Community Acupuncture Project
Elder Renter Council
Got Green
Green Party of Seattle
Housing Justice Project
Lake City Taskforce on Homelessness
Lake Forest Park Citizens' Commission
Lavender Rights Project
LGBTQ Allyship
Nickelsville
People Power Washington
Poor People's Campaign
QLaw Foundation of Washington
Real Change
Resident Action Project (RAP)
Seattle Democratic Socialists of America
Seattle Renters' Commission
Seattle Student Union
SHARE and WHEEL
Share The Cities Organizing Collective
Subvert UD
Tech 4 Housing
Tenant Law Center
Tenants Union of Washington State
The Urbanist
UAW Local 4121
UTOPIA Washington
VOCAL-WA
Washington Build Back Black Alliance
Washington Community Action Network
Washington Low Income Housing Alliance
WBBA/FMS Global Strategies
Welcoming Wallingford