

Dear King County Councilmembers,

We are writing in support of the [transformative tenant protections package](#) put forward by King County Councilmembers Jeanne Kohl-Welles and Girmay Zahilay and co-sponsored by Councilmember Dave Upthegrove. These important measures will help to protect renters in unincorporated King County from unfair, discriminatory, deceptive, and abusive practices. We urge the Council to pass this legislation before eviction moratoriums expire on June 30 and without weakening the protections it offers.

This package includes a strong Just Cause eviction law that will bring unincorporated King County in line with cities such as Federal Way and Auburn. Data from 2019 on evictions filings (released by the King County Bar Association) show that unincorporated King County saw more no-cause evictions than any other jurisdiction in the county. In 2019, 19.8% of all no-cause evictions were in unincorporated King County, despite only 6.9% of all evictions occurring in these areas. 12.6% of evictions in unincorporated King County were without cause, compared to just 4.4% of all evictions countywide. As it stands, without Just Cause, landlords with property in unincorporated King County can accept incoming federal rental assistance funds and turn around and issue a 20-day notice or refuse to renew a lease as soon as Governor Inslee's moratorium expires.

The legislation goes beyond requiring a landlord to have a legitimate reason to evict. It also caps move-in, security and other fees and deposits and allows for incremental payments, as most King County renters do not have an extra \$600 in their bank account in case of emergency, let alone thousands of dollars available upfront to secure new housing. It requires landlords to provide up to 4 months' notice for significant rent increases, giving renters more time to figure out alternative housing options if they cannot afford to stay. For renters on a fixed income such as disability or social security benefits, it allows them to adjust their rent due date so they are not constantly battling late fees on top of rent. It also prevents rent hikes in unsafe or unlivable housing. And it prohibits landlords from requesting an applicant's Social Security number in the screening process, a practice that largely impacts immigrant communities of color. Together, these protections constitute a reasonable Landlord Code of Conduct that provides renters with some recourse against predatory landlords.

As King County's population has grown rapidly in the last decade, low and moderate-income residents, especially Black, Indigenous and other folks of color have been pushed out of Seattle due to rising rent prices and stagnant wages. Data from the 2018 "Losing Home" report showed that Black people and Black women in particular are evicted at far higher rates than their white counterparts. The lack of renter protections only exacerbates the ongoing gentrification and housing insecurity that communities of color already face.

Demographics from 2020 showed Skyway, a neighborhood south of Rainier Beach in Seattle, is home to the largest population of Black folks in the entire state of Washington, yet because it doesn't fall within city limits, its residents aren't protected by Seattle's Just Cause ordinance. Similar can be said of White Center, a neighborhood that sits between Seattle and Burien but falls outside of both city limits and is home to one of the most diverse populations in the entire state. Failing to implement stronger renter protections for these areas leaves these residents susceptible to predatory landlords who can easily retaliate against renters who exert their rights by issuing a 20-day notice to terminate their month-to-month tenancy, increase their rent as a means to force them out or simply not renew the lease. It also leaves an open door for discriminatory and racist behavior without repercussions.

On top of all of this, we are in the midst of a global pandemic that has killed over half a million people across the country and left millions unemployed and unable to pay their rent. Our local and state governments are rushing to distribute federal rental assistance funds before the Governor's moratorium expires at the end of June. The moratorium, while it has protected most renters from eviction, is a temporary measure; renters need strong long-term protections that will last in a post-pandemic world. Several King County cities already have similar protections in place and it's time that unincorporated King County catches up and protects its residents from being pushed further outside of the county. We urge the Council to act quickly and pass the proposed legislation in its entirety and without weakening it before the moratorium expires.

Sincerely,

350 Seattle
43rd District Democrats
African Community Housing & Development
Anything Helps
API Chaya
Atlantic Street Center
Ballard Community Taskforce on Homelessness and Hunger
Be:Seattle
Bothellites for People-Oriented Places (Bo-POP)
Chinese Information and Service Center (CISC)
Civic Ventures
Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence
Coalition to End Urban Indigenous Homelessness
Collective Justice
Creative Justice
Eastside For All
Eastside Legal Assistance Program (ELAP)
Eastside Renters in Crisis
El Centro de la Raza
Faith Action Network
Housing Justice Project
Issaquah Food & Clothing Bank
Issaquah Sammamish Interfaith Coalition
King County Young Democrats
King County Alliance for Human Services
Lake City Taskforce on Homelessness
Lavender Rights Project
Lavender Rights Project's WA Black Trans Task Force
LGBTQ Allyship
LifeWire
MLK Labor
Mother Nation
Nickelsville
North Helpline
Northwest Education Access

North Urban Human Services Alliance (NUHSA)
OneAmerica
PROTEC17
Queen Anne Helpline
Real Change
Resident Fellow Physician Union NW
Seattle Against Foreclosure & Eviction
Seattle Democratic Socialists of America
Seattle Education Association
Seattle Human Services Coalition
Seattle Independent Artists Sustainability Effort
Seattle Indian Health Board
SEIU6 Property Services NW
SEIU 775
SHARE
Share the Cities
Sierra Club Seattle Group
Skyway Coalition
Socialist Alternative
Solid Ground
Tenants Union of Washington
The Urbanist
Transit Riders Union
Trans Women of Color Solidarity Network
UAW 4121
UFCW 21
WA-BLOC
Washington CAN
Washington Housing Alliance Action Fund
Washington Low Income Housing Alliance
Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
Working Families Party WA MLK County
WHEEL
YouthCare
YWCA Passage Point