



## City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

Devin Silvernail & Jessica Westgren, Co-Chairs

December 16, 2019

Re: *Eviction Forgiveness*

Dear Members of the Seattle City Council:

Poor families, immigrants, people of color, women, and LGBT communities are hardest hit by the housing crisis, but how Washington State and the City of Seattle handle evictions is making that impact worse. When families can't afford their rent because of a job loss or a health crisis, they face losing their homes through the eviction process. And even if they go on to recover financially and pay their rent in a timely manner for 3, 5, or even 10 years, that eviction will remain on their record forever and may be used by landlords to deny them housing. When there are no laws in place to seal eviction records or to prohibit their use after a set period of time, our most vulnerable neighbors can be denied housing for a single eviction.

### **The Facts:**

Eviction has a disparate impact on our neighbors who bear the brunt of bigotry in this society.

- 20% of Black women are evicted each year.
- 8% of Latina women are evicted each year.
- 1 in 10 Transgender individuals have been evicted from their home.

Racism, sexism, homophobia, and transphobia all influence how our neighbors are treated and may influence decisions about who loses their home through eviction. Should we traumatize our most vulnerable neighbors twice by perpetually using eviction records to determine if they are eligible for housing?

### **The Solution:**

- Prohibit landlords from using eviction records that are more than 3 years old.
- Seal all eviction records after 7 years.
- Provide incentives to landlords who rent to tenants with eviction records.
- Seal and/or prohibit the use of eviction records that did not end in an involuntary removal (i.e. the issue was resolved by payment, the tenant voluntarily moved etc.)

In our society, even if an individual (or corporation) has made foolish financial choices and misused credit cards and other credit instruments, they can file bankruptcy and many of their debts are forgiven. Even after only a few years post-bankruptcy, credit card lenders are willing to lend bankruptcy filers money again. So why is it that we do not forgive our neighbors who've succumbed to eviction? None of us needs a credit card to live but certainly we need safe shelter.

**Seattle Department of Neighborhoods**, 600 4<sup>th</sup> Ave, 4<sup>th</sup> Floor; PO Box 94649 Seattle, WA 98124-4649

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Please protect our neighbors by prohibiting the use of eviction records older than 3 years when determining eligibility for housing and sealing all eviction records after 7 years.

Thank you for taking action on this important matter.

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CC: Honorable Mayor Jenny A. Durkan, City of Seattle  
Andres Mantilla, Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods