



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL

June 1, 2018

VIA EMAIL ONLY

Dow Constantine
King County Executive
dow.constantine@kingcounty.gov

Re: Harborview Hall

Dear Executive Constantine:

Thank you for working to identify the fastest way forward to opening Harborview Hall—an unused building within close proximity to healthcare services, transit, and social services—as a 24-hour shelter. We hope that we all share a sense of urgency for this collaborative project to move forward.

We understand that the current timeline for opening Harborview Hall is unconfirmed, and could be anywhere from September 2018 to April 2019. Additionally, we understand that there is yet to be a firm commitment to fund the site to be a 24-hour shelter and a continued discussion for the facility to be an overnight-only shelter. The 24-hour shelter is what we need to provide stability for people currently living unsheltered.

Our City needs 24-hour shelters to promote the health and wellbeing of both our homeless and housed residents.

First, shelters provide a vital step toward getting people into safe housing, and the most effective sheltering systems create pathways for people to move into permanent housing, providing each person with a respectful path forward and be a fiscally responsible means to address homelessness. Our City and County's own data and experience shows that 24-hour shelters are the most effective and fiscally smart method to address homelessness.

In contrast, *overnight-only* shelters are a step-backwards from the evidence-based models (and the City's adopted Pathways Home program). Seattle's Human Services Department data shows that exits from homelessness in the first quarter of this year are extremely low (3%) for people using overnight-only shelter, compared to enhanced shelter models (20.5%). 2017 data from HMIS shows that those who did exit from homelessness to housing from emergency shelter were the *most likely* to end up homeless again (19%).

Second, the personal property and belongings of people experiencing homelessness are not safeguarded at most overnight-only shelters. Their belongings also end up in public-spaces reducing the enjoyment and use for our housed and homeless residents.

Third, support services to help homeless residents transition into permanent housing as well as mental health and other supports, are easier to administer when an individual has stable shelter (a home-base). We understand funding constraints and we are committed to working with our regional partners to fund 24-hour services.

We need to open shelters as soon as possible to promote the wellbeing of our residents.

With the average stay in a shelter or encampment being 4-6 months, delay in opening Harborview Hall beyond September simply means more people will be outside during another rainy and cold winter. We understand there are concerns about fire safety and earthquake readiness, but we also know that even as-is, Harborview Hall offers a safer alternative to outdoors. No decision is easy, but the decision to promote all of our residents' welfare needs to always be a priority.

Together, we believe we can identify the systemic issues, and work to figure out how we can streamline processes, give conditional permitting, and/or otherwise ensure that necessary safety requirements do not lead to even more unsafe conditions for those living unsheltered. We thank you for working with us to open Harborview Hall without further delay. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



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cc: KC Councilmember Rod Dembowski
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Leslie Price