



City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

Devin Silvernail & Jessica Westgren, Co-Chairs

November 4, 2019

RE: Pass an Emergency Moratorium on Evictions During Winter

Dear Honorable Council President Harrell and Honorable Members of the Seattle City Council:

The Seattle Renters' Commission urges the City Council to take action in line with City's Homelessness State of Emergency by pausing all evictions effective immediately and to continue a moratorium on evictions through the end of winter. We also urge the City to immediately open all emergency winter shelters for neighbors already living outside. Passing such a moratorium will keep neighbors from being displaced to the streets during the months with the harshest weather and poorest living conditions for neighbors living unsheltered. Likewise, opening emergency shelters now will provide those currently living unsheltered with an opportunity to stay safe. The City declared a Homelessness State of Emergency four years ago. These commonsense measures can save lives and treats this emergency with the severity that it merits.

During winter in Seattle temperatures regularly fall into the 30's overnight and, according to All Home King County's Count Us In a report for 2019, forty-one percent of homeless neighbors sleep outside every night with an additional nineteen percent sleeping in vehicles. Neither of these situations provide much protection from the elements and both can be deadly. According to the King County Medical Examiner's Office, 191 homeless individuals died last year, and fifty-seven percent died outdoors, in a vehicle, or in an encampment. While exposure to the elements cannot be blamed for every one of these deaths, it is most certainly a contributing factor as exposure to harsh weather and living conditions only exacerbates many medical related issues. Additionally, according to the 2019 Point in Time count, eighty-four percent of homeless neighbors were previously housed in King County with eviction given as a direct cause of homelessness for fifteen percent of survey respondents. It isn't just hyperbole when we say that an eviction notice can be a death sentence.

The Seattle Renters' Commission supports a moratorium on winter evictions because it can save lives. This idea isn't a new concept either. According to Article L 613-3 of the Code of Construction and Habitation for the City of Paris, every year the City mandates a pause on evictions from November 1st through March 31st for the expressed purpose of stopping displacement to the streets during the coldest months of the year. In Seattle, we also already have a history of setting limits on evictions in specific circumstances. If a building is in substandard condition or if a property is not registered through RRIO, a landlord is limited from evicting a tenant. Setting limits to curb homelessness and loss of life during winter months should be a no-brainer and would fall in line with procedures that the City already has in place.

We, the Seattle Renters' Commission, strongly advise that the City Council take action on this immediately to protect tenants and prevent further displacement into homelessness during the coldest



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months of the year. If we are truly in a Homelessness State of Emergency, it is time for our City to start acting like it and a moratorium on winter eviction is one way to address this emergency. Please immediately open emergency shelters for neighbors currently living outdoors, pass a moratorium on evictions for this winter, and put in place regulations for eviction protection during subsequent winters.

Thank you for taking action on this important matter.

Seattle Renters' Commission

Cc: Honorable Mayor Jenny A. Durkan, City of Seattle
Andrés Mantilla, Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods
Jason Johnson, Interim Director, Seattle Human Services Department