



Seattle Human Rights Commission

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June 20, 2017

Mayor Ed Murray
600 4th Ave, 7th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Seattle City Councilmembers
600 4th Ave, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Sent via electronic message

RE: Expressing concern over this year's homeless data from 'Count Us In 2017'

Dear Mayor Murray and City Councilmembers:

We, the Seattle Human Rights Commission, write to express our concern regarding the latest numbers reported from All Home's 2017 Count Us In. Results showed 11,643 people experiencing homelessness in the county, an 8% increase over last year's count. The report also evidences a concerning overrepresentation of people of color (55%) and people who identify as LGBTQ (18%), compared to the general population. Additionally, the numbers of people living without any shelter increased by 22% from last year, reflecting a distressing multi-year trend. Nearly 70% of those without shelter were counted in Seattle.

These numbers demonstrate that our city is facing a public health and housing emergency that ought to be treated as such. Despite meaningful interventions by the City, current policies have proven inadequate to address the emergency of homelessness.

This City has declared itself a Human Rights City, voluntarily bound by human rights law. Article 25 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights includes the right to housing as part of the right to an adequate standard of living, stating: "Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing (...)". At present, our City has failed to protect this right.

We urge you to make serious commitments toward ending the homelessness crisis this year,

including exploring innovative options to expand the affordable housing stock for our poorest residents. If we truly intend to treat this homelessness crisis as an emergency, we should prioritize a reduction in those living outside in Seattle on a year-to-year basis. We hope that the 2018 count will show a marked decrease from the 2017 numbers, and that you commit to that as a goal for the remainder of this year.

Thank you for your time and consideration on this issue.

Sincerely,

The Seattle Human Rights Commission

CC: George Scarola