



# City of Seattle

Mike McGinn, Mayor

## Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

Devon Alisa Abdallah, Ph.D. and Shree R. Dahal, Co-Chairs

DATE: 16 September 2013

TO: Ron Severt  
President and CEO  
Space Needle LLC  
203 Sixth Avenue North  
Seattle, WA 98109

FROM: Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission

RE: Fair contract for Seattle Space Needle workers

Dear Mr. Severt,

On behalf of the City of Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission, we write to express strong support for the Seattle Space Needle workers who are seeking a fair contract. We encourage you to reach a fair settlement soon.

Immigrants and refugees are a continuously growing population in Seattle (17%) and constitute a significant percentage of the hospitality industry workforce. For many immigrants and refugees, their first jobs in the United States are in the hospitality industry.

We appreciate the contributions of the Space Needle Corporation to our local economy by providing a high quality dining and event space, as well being an internationally recognizable tourist destination. We also appreciate the numerous local workers that you employ, many of them immigrants. The union jobs you provide serve as an example to the hospitality and restaurant industry in Seattle.

The Commission also supports workers' collective bargaining rights and respects the role of unions, which ensure men and women who work hard in our community have access to medical benefits, living wage jobs, safe workplaces, and other worker protections. The right to collectively bargain, especially in traditionally low wage sectors, has allowed generations of immigrants to provide for their families and participate in civic life in the United States. We believe strengthening the right to collectively bargain is important to the immigrant experience in Seattle.

We are therefore disturbed to learn the Space Needle management has terminated and suspended immigrant union activists, told workers they could be replaced, denied overtime pay to workers, and encouraged workers to resign from the union and not pay their dues. It is troubling the federal government is taking your company to trial for numerous Unfair Labor Practices, many of which were committed against immigrant workers. We have heard the testimony of one immigrant worker, for example, who was denied overtime pay for months, and then retaliated against for his work with the union to get the overtime pay he deserved.

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The City of Seattle Immigrant and Refugee Commission works with city agencies, the Mayor's office, City Council, local non-profits, and community organizations to ensure Seattle is a place where immigrants and refugees are treated with dignity and have access to the resources they need to succeed in making a new life for themselves and their families. Seattle's social and economic welfare cannot improve if our most vulnerable residents cannot support themselves.

Again, we appreciate that the Space Needle is a tourism destination, restaurant and event space that represents the City of Seattle to the world. That is why we strongly urge you to respect your workers' wishes for a fair settlement which includes living wages, continued benefits, and job security.

Sincerely,



Devon Alisa Abdallah, Co-Chair  
Immigrant and Refugee Commission



Shree R. Dahal, Co-Chair  
Immigrant and Refugee Commission

cc: Mayor Mike McGinn  
Seattle City Council