



City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

ChrisTiana ObeySumner & Jessica Westgren, Co-Chairs

April 1, 2019

RE: Extending Rent Increase Notice Period in Seattle

Seattle City Council,

The Seattle Renters' Commission urges the City Council take action by amending SMC 7.24.030 to provide the renters of Seattle with 180 days' notice for any rent increase. The unpredictability and rate of rent increases in the past decade has caused a massive burden on renters which has led to both homelessness and displacement of Seattleites. By providing renters with 180 days, the City will give tenants adequate time to make financial adjustments, save money, or find new housing when faced with a rent increase.

Seattle has rapidly become one of the most expensive cities to live in over the last decade and as a result, rent increases have become a key driver in economic evictions, displacement among women, families, poor communities, and people of color. Meanwhile, Seattle has not addressed rent increase notices since 1999. Considering recent studies that show almost two-thirds of Americans are one paycheck away from a disaster, better tenant protections must be considered to alleviate the consequences of a sudden increase in monthly costs.

Currently, forty-six percent of Seattle renters are rent burdened and a worker earning minimum wage at \$15 per hour at 40 hours per week will spend 73 percent of their earnings on an average Seattle rent of \$1,770 per month. Meanwhile, rent climbed 62 percent on average in Seattle between 2008 and 2017, according to former Seattle rent tracking agency Dupre + Scott.

We believe that, regionally, Seattle has fallen behind on rent increase protections. Portland, Oregon and Vancouver, British Columbia both provide 90 days for tenants, and, with the passage of Ordinance #28559, Tacoma provides 60 days across the board. If we look outside our region, Montréal, and Québec as a whole, mandates up to 180 days for tenants on fixed term leases. While Portland, Vancouver, and Tacoma all offer better protections than Seattle, we see Montréal as the example to follow, as even 60 or 90 days is still not enough time for most Seattle tenants to rearrange their lives.

The idea of increasing the notice period is not new, as one should look no further than House Bill 2051 and Senate Bill 5377 (2015) which proposed on a state level a 90-day notice of increase above 10%. This proposal received supportive public testimony from former Seattle City Council member Nick Licata and current Seattle Council member Lisa Herbold, among others. Additionally, Washington State is currently weeks away from passing a mandatory 60 day notice for rent increases, which may work in other parts



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of the state, but is still not adequate for the struggle that Seattle renters face with every new rent increase.

Given that some rentals require first and last month's rent, as well as a security deposit, receiving 30 or 60 days' notice for a significant rent increase is inadequate in today's rental market. Tenants, already severely rent burdened, need both time and financial support to find housing sufficient to meet their needs, which can include transportation, school, daycare, and job-related issues. With this change, however, tenants will be given sufficient time to respond. By mandating an adequate rent increase notice period, the City Council has the power to give renters stability. Therefore; we, the Seattle Renters' Commission strongly advise that the City Council take immediate action on this issue by amending SMC 7.24.030 to give renters 180 days' notice for any rent increase.

Thank you for taking action on this important matter.

The Seattle Renters' Commission

Cc: Andres Mantilla, Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods