



City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

Devin Silvernail & Jessica Westgren, Co-Chairs

September 30, 2019

RE: Passing Just Cause Eviction Protections in King County & Washington State

ATTN: King County Council, Seattle Office of Intergovernmental Affairs, Seattle City Council & Mayor Jenny Durkan

The Seattle Renters' Commission urges the King County Council and Washington State Legislature take action to stop discrimination, retaliation, and displacement of Washington tenants by enacting Just Cause eviction protections in their jurisdictions, similar to ordinances in Seattle and around the country. We also urge Mayor Jenny Durkan and Seattle City Council to pass a resolution supporting statewide Just Cause protections.

Millions of renters across Washington currently live with the threat of receiving a 20-Day Notice to Vacate, or what's commonly referred to as a "no cause notice" or a "no cause eviction." The practice of issuing no cause notices allows property owners and managers to force a tenant from their home with no reason and gives them 20 days to find a solution or become homeless. Under the current system, tenants are left with the potential of expulsion without any formal process or any sort of body to intercede when the 20-Day Notice is being issued. This effectively bypasses the judicial system, which is the body where all formal evictions are processed. Passage of a statewide Just Cause Law would protect renters while still giving landlords the option to formally evict a tenant who is in breach of lease.

We know, based on studies done by Princeton's Eviction Lab and locally by the Housing Justice Project, that legal evictions disproportionately affect people of color, women, the LGBTQ community, and immigrant communities. Knowing this, it is reasonable to expect that under-the-radar no cause evictions would impact these communities to an even greater extent. Without accountability, property owners that seek to discriminate or retaliate can do so knowing that they will probably get away with it unless tenants organize or are vocal about this unfair practice.

The Seattle Renters' Commission supports Just Cause eviction protections, because we know that they keep tenants housed and safe from the threat of no cause evictions. Just Cause laws provide landlords with a set of guidelines on how and when they are able to evict a tenant, while keeping all activities within the walls of the judicial system. To continue allowing landlords to hold the threat of a 20-Day notice above tenants' heads is simply irresponsible during the affordability crisis that Washington is facing - from Spokane to Seattle, Vancouver to Bellingham, and all parts in between.

We, the Seattle Renters' Commission strongly advise that the King County City Council to pass a Just Cause Eviction Ordinance to protect tenants in unincorporated parts of the county from unjust evictions. We also urge the Mayor and City Council to pass a resolution in support of statewide Just



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Cause laws. Finally, we urge the State Senate and House of Representatives to pass Just Cause during the next legislative session, because tenants in Wenatchee, Moses Lake, and Longview deserve the same protections, peace of mind, and stability that Seattle renters have had for decades. You all have the power to help our neighbors in this crisis. Here is your opportunity to make a positive impact in the lives of millions of Washingtonians.

Thank you for taking action on this important matter.

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Cc: Andres Mantilla, Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods