

June 26th, 2019

Mayor Jenny Durkan and Seattle City Councilmembers
600 4th Ave
Seattle, WA 98104

Open Letter to Mayor Durkan and Members of the Seattle City Council Regarding the Office of Housing Director Hire.

Dear, Mayor Durkan and Seattle City Council.

As you meet with candidates for the position of the Director of our City's Office of Housing, we write to share some core principles, community priorities, and recommendations to assist you in selecting a strong leader with the right orientation to address housing affordability, steward precious public resources, and partner with local and regional experts, community organizations, and residents. The new director has an enormous task ahead of them. It will be their responsibility to respond to and find solutions to our growing and increasingly complicated housing, homelessness, and displacement crises. We need a bold leader who will listen to those experiencing these crises first-hand, who will be able to prioritize a long list of needs, and who will invest in a comprehensive long-term vision for change.

The undersigned organizations fill a wealth of roles in our city, and have history, experience, and knowledge relevant for the new Office of Housing Director. We both represent and serve Seattle residents, including people experiencing homelessness, communities of color, immigrants and refugees, and low-wage workers. We believe the person who is hired for this position should have a strong vision for a city that embraces proven models and new ideas around creating, maintaining, and incentivizing housing affordability; should be grounded in racial, economic, and social justice, and should ensure that the City's public dollars are directed towards housing families and individuals whose housing needs will not be met by the market. Our City cannot afford to spend precious public resources to subsidize housing for households at or above 80% Area Median Income until we have progressive revenue that fully addresses the shortage of units affordable for households who the market will never serve.

Our Just and Equitable Housing Vision

- All people are housed safely and healthfully, and pay no more than 30% of their income towards housing costs.
- All neighborhoods have high access to opportunity so residents don't have to choose between living near family, community, or culturally relevant services and ensuring they or their children have access to a brighter future.
- Communities of color, low-income households, LGBTQ people, and people with disabilities can thrive in place without threat of economic or physical displacement and eviction.

- Communities who are most vulnerable to economic volatility drive housing and equitable development solutions and decision-making, as exemplified by the Equitable Development Initiative Advisory Board and the International Special Review District.
- Our public agencies collaborate so that as a city:
 - We can react swiftly, effectively, and with compassion to crises.
 - We can respond to changing conditions.
 - As the population continues to grow and we invest in necessary new infrastructure, we see simultaneous related investments in housing, jobs, and services to mitigate any unintended consequences.
 - We can efficiently enforce our existing policies.
- We will have abundant resources, including new revenue for low-income accessible housing and anti-displacement strategies that does not rely primarily on the generosity of Seattle voters to tax themselves or the goodwill of major employers or institutions in our city.

How do we get there? We believe these are foundational solutions that the new Director of the Office of Housing should be empowered to invest in to address our related housing unaffordability, homelessness, and displacement crises.

- Keep residents housed by strengthening and enforcing tenant and evictions protections, mitigating rent increases, and supporting low-income homeowners to stay in their homes.
- Focus and grow our resources across the low-income housing continuum for households earning between 0-80% AMI, and distribute and allocate those resources based on the greatest need, i.e. housing that serves households earning less than 30% of Area Median Income.
- Target our resources to respond quickly to house Seattle residents who do not have homes.
- Invest in community-based solutions to displacement like tenant cooperatives, community land trusts, and other community stewardship models to ensure permanent affordability.
- Mitigate the residual and compounding effects of past public and private policies that have inequitably harmed frontline communities.

We look forward to working with you and with the new Director of the Office of Housing to solve the housing, homelessness, and displacement challenges we collectively face as a city.

Sincerely,

Nicole Vallesterro Keenan- Lai, Executive Director
Puget Sound Sage

Alison Eisinger, Executive Director
Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness

Violet Lavatai, Co- Executive Director
Tenant's Union of WA

Gregory Davis, Managing Strategist
Rainier Beach Action Coalition

Munira Mohamed, Executive Director
East African Community Services

Sarya Sos, Program Manager
Cham Refugees Community

Yordanos Teferi and Asmeret Habte
Multicultural Community Coalition

Tony To and Linda Freeburg
HomeSight

Evelyn Allen
Black Community Impact Alliance
CCS-Village Spirit Center

Pradeepta Upadhyay, Executive Director
InterIm Community Development Association

Dennis Comer
Central Area Collaborative

Katie Wilson
Transit Rider's Union

Quynh Pham, Executive Director
Friends of Little Saigon

Rich Stolz, Executive Director
OneAmerica

Maria-Jose Soerens, Executive Director
Puentes: Advocacy, Counseling & Education
Resistencia Coffee, South Park

Ahmed Ali, Executive Director
Somali Health Board

Sahra Farah, Executive Director
Somali Community Services of Seattle

Debbie Carlsen, Executive Director
LGBTQ Allyship

Tsegaye Gebru
Horn of Africa Services

Chris Persons, Director
Capitol Hill Housing

Sarah Cherin, Special Assistant to the President
UFCW Local 21

Agnes Navarro, Executive Director
Filipino Community of Seattle

Mary Nguyen, Executive Director
Washing Community Action Network

K. Wyking Garret, President
Africatown Community Land Trust

Kathleen Hosfeld, Executive Director
Homestead Community Land Trust

Michael Ramos, Executive Director
Church Council of Greater Seattle

David Bestock, Executive Director
Delridge Neighborhood Development Association

Marty Kooistra, Executive Director
Housing Development Consortium

Yemane Gebremichael
African Diaspora of Washington

Zenia Javalera, President
SEIU Local 6

Rooted in Rights

Disability Rights Washington

CC: members of the Office of Housing Director Search Committee