



美國西雅圖中華會館 CHONG WA BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

May 8, 2020

Dear Mayor Durkan,

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The Chong Wa Benevolent Association is the umbrella organization for 21 traditional Chinatown associations. We're happy to be a partner during this COVID-19 emergency. Since March we've been working with other agencies in the Chinatown International District (CID), and city and county departments to translate and pass on critical health and safety information to the Cantonese and Mandarin speakers in the Chinatown community, as well as connecting and assisting business owners with small business resources.

Being the first state with a reported COVID-19 case, we applaud your leadership and collaboration with state and county officials to provide a proactive science-based response to flatten the curve and local stabilization resources to protect our region's health and livelihood.

We are reaching out to you today regarding a serious safety problem that we need the city to act on. There is a growing encampment under the I-5 freeway on King Street (photos attached) that took two years of community effort (2015 to 2017) to have it removed.

The encampment poses a threat to our fragile neighborhood on many levels. Due to COVID-19 anti-Chinese stigma, the economy of the area was devastated long before restaurant "delivery and take out only" began. Chinatown is extremely vulnerable to COVID-19 due to its density and high number of senior housing units. With this encampment we're experiencing the seen-before effects on our property and in all three CID neighborhoods: hypodermic needles, campers sleeping on our front steps blocking the doorway, piles of garbage, break-ins. However, this encampment presents an increased level of physical danger to the public. There have been two recent shootings, one occurring at 10th and Weller, within a block of the encampment and one in the encampment at 8th and King which resulted in a fatality. The encampment residents are clustered closely together without proper facilities for frequent hand washing and sanitation, putting them at high risk of contracting and passing on COVID-19 and Hepatitis A.

Despite social disparities that placed unfair burdens on Chinese, forced to live in dirty industrial-adjacent areas of town in sub-standard quarters deprived of basic services, historically Chinese and Chinatowns in the U.S. have been blamed for epidemics. Today when it comes to fending off COVID-19, we still have the extra burden of proving we are not a virus. Of all places, there cannot be a COVID-19 or Hepatitis A outbreak in Chinatown. If an outbreak occurs, regardless if it is spurred by the unfair burden of this encampment, it will reflect negatively and inerasably on Chinatown. Organizations and volunteers have been working tirelessly putting themselves on the front lines every day in the CID to prevent an outbreak and ensure wellbeing. This growing encampment is an affront to all the efforts, past and present to keep the CID safe and healthy. We implore you to not let history repeat itself.

We've heard that there have been discussions about providing trash service, portable toilets and wash stations to remedy the situation. That is not a solution. As other camps around the city are relocated this camp grows larger each day. The encampment needs to be removed immediately before another fatal shooting or an outbreak of COVID-19 and/or Hepatitis A occurs.

If you have any questions I can be reached at 206-679-5507. I look forward to hearing from you. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Mei-Jui Lin
President

Bing Kung Association

Chew Lun Benevolent Association

Eng Suey Sun Family Association

Gee How Oak Tin Family Association

Greater Seattle Chinese Chamber of Commerce

Han Ninh Community Association

Hip Sing Association

Hop Sing Association

Kai Ping Association

Kwong Tung Association

Lee Family Association

Luck Ngi Musical Club

Lung Kong Family Association

Seniors in Action

Soo Yuen Benevolent Association

Suey Sing Association

Taishan Association

Teo Chew Mutual Association

Wong Family Association

Yee Fung Toy Family Association

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CHONG WA BENEVOLENT ASSOCIATION

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Attachments

Cc: King County Executive Dow Constantine
Seattle Senior Deputy Mayor Fong
Seattle Deputy Mayor Rananathan
Seattle Police Chief Best
Seattle Police Captain Allen
Seattle City Council Member Herbold
Seattle City Council Member Morales
Seattle City Council Member Sawant
Seattle City Council Member Pedersen
Seattle City Council Member Juarez
Seattle City Council Member Strauss
Seattle City Council Member Lewis
Seattle City Council Member Mosqueda
Seattle City Council Member Gonzalez
Department of Neighborhoods Director Andres Mantilla

