

Dear Mayor Durkan and Councilmembers:

Thank you to Councilmember Mosqueda and the Seattle City Council for demonstrating your leadership and voting unanimously to pass JumpStart Seattle with a robust spending plan. The bold investments outlined in this bill will help build resiliency for residents of our city and lay the groundwork for an equitable and inclusive recovery. **We call on Seattle City Council to override Mayor Durkan's veto of the Jumpstart Seattle COVID-19 relief bill and urge the Mayor to act swiftly to appropriate needed money for emergency relief.**

The COVID-19 public health emergency has exacerbated our city's and region's long-standing and accelerating affordable housing and homelessness crisis. Over the last decade, Seattle renters saw average rents rise by 69 percent, which is double the national average. And for every \$100 increase in average rents, there is a corresponding 15% increase in homelessness. Our investments in affordable homes for our community have not been able to match the scale of need that has been growing year after year. The combined crises of COVID-19 and housing unaffordability and homelessness, coupled with the looming threats of large waves of evictions and foreclosures threaten the stability, health, and strength of our city even more.

Low-income, vulnerable, and BIPOC communities have historically disproportionately shouldered the burden of disease in our communities. This means that people experiencing homelessness are at exceptionally high risk of contracting and falling gravely ill to infectious diseases, such as COVID-19. Seattle is no exception. BIPOC communities are overrepresented in the number of people experiencing homelessness and they have also been some of the hardest hit communities. With Seattle shelters maxed to capacity and little to no access to public and community spaces such as libraries, community centers, businesses and public services, thousands of Seattleites are struggling to access basic needs such as food, clean water, services, restrooms and showers.

**As the number of confirmed positive COVID-19 infections continue to rise, widespread community transmission is a real and grave concern. It is clear that Seattle and King County need to create additional COVID-appropriate shelter options that can keep people safer and healthier and address the needs of those congregate shelters that remain. It is critical that Seattle do more** to de-intensify congregate shelters by providing access to resources that can help ensure individuals and families experiencing homelessness, who are more likely to have one or more pre-existing health condition and are at increased risk of exposure to COVID-19, can safely follow appropriate public health measures to prevent and mitigate the spread of disease.

**We call on Seattle City Council to override Mayor Durkan's veto of Jumpstart Seattle.**

We also call on the Mayor to act swiftly to appropriate needed money to immediately support our neighbors experiencing homelessness, and to make necessary investments in public health, appropriate and accessible shelter, services, and permanent supportive housing.

Jumpstart Seattle would invest \$36 million in 2020 in **immediate housing stability and emergency homelessness response** to get folks who are on the brink of homelessness the financial assistance they need to stay housed, provide housing that follows public health measures for people experiencing homelessness, and support our non-profit service providers at the front lines of this crisis.

**The \$36 million includes:**

- \$19 million to expand homelessness prevention programs and rental assistance;
- \$11 million to provide funding for non-congregate shelter/housing;
  - \$1 million to expand mortgage counseling and foreclosure prevention programs;
  - \$5 million to support non-profit affordable housing/shelter providers with PPE, staffing, and cleaning expenses, and costs of lost rent.

This bold investment will help build resilience for residents of our city, starting with those who have been most directly impacted by the economic crisis created by the COVID-19 public health emergency. And, it will bolster the elements we know are essential for our region to experience an equitable recovery -- with investments in affordable housing, homelessness response, food security, small business response and childcare.

Evictions fall disproportionately on women and people of color, with people of color constituting approximately 35 percent of renters, and nearly 52 percent of evictions involving people of color. Thousands of Seattle renters face eviction threats every year, and the 2018 Losing Home report found that most tenants who are evicted become homeless.

**Jumpstart Seattle will also invest in the long-term solutions to our homelessness crisis through permanent supportive housing that meets their ongoing needs.**

Over the last ten years, our region has lost 112,000 affordable homes attainable to low-income households as a result of booming economic growth that did not result in

shared prosperity for all in our community. The King County Regional Affordable Housing Task Force found that an additional 244,000 affordable homes are needed in the region by 2040 to ensure that low-income families are no longer cost burdened. Additionally, the Third Door Coalition estimates that we need 6,500 units of permanent supportive housing to solve chronic homelessness in Seattle/King County today.

Starting in 2022, Jumpstart Seattle includes over \$200 million annual investments:

- **Affordable Housing:** \$132 million for construction or acquisition and operations of rental housing for households at 0%- 50% of area median income (AMI) with at least seventy-five percent used to house those extremely house burdened or homeless between 0-30% of AMI.
- **Equitable Development:** \$20 million for the Equitable Development Initiative (EDI) to support the non-housing and affordable housing components of EDI projects

Beginning in 2022, sixty-five percent of the funding, at least \$132 million annually, will be dedicated to the construction or acquisition and operating and service costs for deeply affordable housing. This is housing and services for those working and living in poverty between 0-50% of AMI. More importantly, seventy-five percent of the \$132 million is allocated towards affordable housing at 0-30% of AMI – our lowest wage workers, families, and seniors living in poverty, and our neighbors recovering from homelessness. This funding could be used to create Permanent Supportive Housing (PSH) or deeply affordable rental housing for households with very low incomes. The remaining twenty-five percent may be used for housing affordable up to 50% of AMI, provided those projects also include units affordable to households at or below 30% of AMI.

As the Third Door Coalition and regional housing partners and researchers have shown, PSH is critical to solving homelessness and is a key component to our region's ability to address the record number of people living unsheltered. PSH is a combination of housing and services designed to support people to recover from and permanently avoid homelessness. **Permanent Supportive Housing is the only proven strategy to solve chronic homelessness and has a success rate of roughly 95 percent.** PSH works, and this proposal helps create the infrastructure and support to make it possible.

The JumpStart proposal also invests in workforce housing and housing for those with the lowest incomes. Affordable housing between 30 - 50% of AMI would serve households with incomes between \$23,250 - \$38,750 for an individual and \$33,200 - \$55,350 for a family of four in 2019. These affordability levels serve seniors, people living with disabilities, and the lowest wage workers and their families. Creating deeply affordable housing is cost effective.

**Housing is key to our recovery—not just from the COVID public health and economic crises, but from the long-standing homelessness and housing affordability crises** that have been impacting our communities with no reprieve. Housing is crucial for physical well-being and economic stability and is essential to our public health and economic recovery—and we must invest now and into the future to meet our community's needs.

Sincerely,

Washington Low Income Housing Alliance

Seattle-King County Coalition on Homelessness

Housing Development Consortium of Seattle King County

Enterprise Community Partners

Downtown Emergency Service Center

Church Council of Greater Seattle

Plymouth Housing

YouthCare

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[i] Global Citizen (2020). [5 Reasons COVID-19 Will Impact the Fight to End Extreme Poverty](#)