



Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan
 Seattle City Council President Lorena González
 Seattle City Councilmembers Lisa Herbold, Debora Juarez, Andrew Lewis, Tammy Morales, Teresa Mosqueda,
 Alex Pedersen, Kshama Sawant, Dan Strauss

Seattle City Hall
 600 4th Avenue, Seattle, WA 98104

June 2, 2020

Dear Mayor Durkan and Members of the Seattle City Council:

COVID-19 has left our city, our community, and our families in an extremely vulnerable situation. While we know our city government has been stretched in every direction to address a growing number of concerns in this unprecedented time, we are writing to you because we feel that needs of our unhoused community have been severely overlooked.

Over the last few weeks, the City has removed people in encampments in Ballard and the Chinatown/International District against explicit guidance from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) that such actions increase potential for an infectious disease to spread and separate people from their connections to care. Moving people from neighborhood to neighborhood or from location to location within a neighborhood, without resources or better places to go, simply does not address the homelessness or public health crisis at hand. Now more than ever we need real solutions to respond to the unmet needs of our community.

In order to preserve the public health and safety of both housed residents and those experiencing homelessness during a pandemic, the City must urgently and proactively provide resources ranging from

short-term solutions (like sanitation stations, access to public bathrooms, and clean water) to interim solutions (like organized tent camps or tiny home villages) to longer term housing solutions (like individual hotel rooms and apartments). We believe that displacement of individuals outside, living singly or in encampments, only exacerbates the public health crisis we are currently in, and we urge the City to prioritize the safety and health needs of those in our community, whether they be housed residents, businesses, or those experiencing homelessness.

We are asking for a robust response from the City of Seattle including the following:

- A commitment to more individual housing options such as hotel and motel rooms, where unsheltered individuals have access to wrap-around services that match their needs.
- Sanctioned, well-supported, and resourced camps where unsheltered individuals can safely distance their tents and receive coordinated care.
- Immediately open and deploy more sanitation stations, mobile shower trailers, public bathrooms, and clean water near encampments around the city, especially in low-resourced and predominantly POC neighborhoods.
- Share resources between the Navigation Team and community based outreach workers and case managers – specifically, allow community-based outreach teams to refer people directly to any available shelter that matches their needs, using a shared process to prioritize people at high risk for illness.
- Community-driven and collaborative approaches that are rooted in principles of equity and justice and informed by an understanding of historical, collective, and individual trauma; that bring additional resources to bear on an effective response; and that minimize harm to individuals and neighborhoods.

We are concerned that limited progress towards finding sustainable solutions to support those experiencing homelessness is creating unnecessary tensions among marginalized communities who bear the adverse impact of the situation and the burden. We need the city and all its leaders to come up with the solutions that preserve the dignity of those most impacted and support communities of color.

Signed:

API Chaya - Kalayo Pestano, Community Organizing Program Manager

Asian Counseling and Referral Service - Michael Byun, Executive Director

BAYAN-USA Seattle - Sharlyn Santiago, BAYAN-USA Seattle Regional Coordinator

Casa Latina - Marcos Martinez, Executive Director

Catholic Community Services - Bill Hallerman, Agency Director

Chief Seattle Club - Colleen Echohawk, Executive Director

Chinese Information and Service Center - Michael Itti, Executive Director

Church Council of Greater Seattle - Michael Ramos, Executive Director

Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence - Merrill Cousin, Executive Director

Community Lunch on Capitol Hill - Jeff Wolcott, Executive Director

DESC - Daniel Malone, Executive Director

El Centro de la Raza - Estela Ortega, Executive Director

Evergreen Treatment Services - Steve Woolworth, CEO

Friends of Little Saigon - Quynh Pham, Executive Director
Helping Link - Minh Duc Nguyen, Executive Director
Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI) - Sharon Lee, Executive Director
Neighborhood House - Janice Deguchi, Executive Director
Plymouth Housing - Paul Lambros, CEO
Public Defender Association - Lisa Daugaard, Executive Director
REACH Program, Evergreen Treatment Services - Chloe Gale, Co-Director
Real Change - Timothy Harris, Founding Director
Seattle Indian Health Board - Esther Lucero, Chief Executive Officer
Seattle South Asians Building Accountability & Healing (SABAH)
Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness - Alison Eisinger, Executive Director
The National Coalition to End Urban Indigenous Homelessness (NCEUIH) - Patricia Allen-Dick, Coalition
Liaison & Community Advocate
Urban League - Michelle Merriweather, Executive Director
YouthCare - Melinda Giovengo, Executive Director
YWCA Seattle|King|Snohomish - Maria Chavez Wilcox, Chief Executive Officer

cc:

Mami Hara, General Manager/CEO, Seattle Public Utilities
Jason Johnson, Interim Director, Human Services Department
Andrés Mantilla, Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods
Carmen Best, Chief of Police, Seattle Police Department