

April 5, 2021

Governor Jay Inslee
Governor of the State of Washington

Senator Andy Billig
Senate Majority Leader

Representative Laurie Jinkins
Speaker of the House

Senator David Frockt
Vice Chair, Senate Ways and Means Committee

Senator Christine Rolfes
Chair, Senate Ways and Means Committee

Representative Tim Ormsby
Chair, House Appropriations Committee

Representative Steve Tharinger
Chair, House Capital Budget Committee

RE: Resources to Address Homelessness in our Communities

Dear Governor Inslee, Majority Leader Billig, Speaker Jinkins, Chair Rolfes,
Chair Ormsby, Vice Chair Frockt and Chair Tharinger:

We write to you as local officials who are the front lines of addressing the crisis of homelessness in our communities. During the COVID-19 pandemic, homelessness including chronic homelessness has magnified in every part of the state in our parks, highway rights of way, and sidewalks, and to address this crisis, we must all use our collective resources to create more shelters, long-term housing, and appropriate services such as behavioral health.

As each of you know, Washington State has seen one of the largest increases in the nation of individuals experiencing homelessness, including a substantial number of children and families living unsheltered. It is estimated that statewide there are approximately 2,000 families and children living unsheltered, 2,000 homelessness youth unsheltered and at least 7,000 other individuals living unsheltered based on the 2020 Point in Time Count. Cities and counties alone cannot solve this crisis.

The influx of federal dollars from the American Rescue Plan Act means unprecedented resources are available to our state. While grant programs for

homelessness are extremely limited, flexible local and state direct funding must be used to address this crisis. While each of us will be committing a significant portion of new one-time federal funding for homelessness and housing, the scale and scope of this crisis requires all of our commitment. We call on you to commit at least \$400 million from one-time federal funding to meaningfully address homelessness in our cities and counties. This should be in addition to the at least \$300 million proposed across the Governor, House, and Senate budgets for the Housing Trust Fund, Enhanced Shelter Capacity grants, and Shelter Rapid Acquisition fund.

While these unprecedented federal resources are available, the real estate market downturn resulting from the pandemic and associated reduction in rents has meant that multifamily buildings at or near completion, building sites and hotels are available at a reasonable cost. These buildings can be immediately turned into affordable homes or construction can begin immediately, drastically reducing the time for buildings to come on-line. We cannot miss this opportunity to act.

This past year, California invested \$846 million in Homekey to quickly bring 6,000 units of affordable housing and permanent shelters online for people experiencing homelessness in six months and are expected to further expand this program with the American Rescue Plan Act. Local public entities including cities, counties and public housing authorities were granted funds to be used to purchase and rehabilitate housing, including hotels, motels, vacant apartment buildings, and other buildings and convert them into interim or permanent, long-term housing. The average statewide cost to Homekey per unit is \$123,987 and the average statewide local match is \$23,987, making the average total cost per unit \$147,974. All units closed in less than six months.

We believe Washington should make a similar historic investment at this critical moment. Investing \$400 million in a similar program as Homekey could create safe places for more than 2,600 individuals in six months including many chronically homeless individuals, families, and foster kids including LGBTQ youth.

We urge you to provide these resources and ensure they may be used flexibly to ensure each of our communities is able to use the funds to address the unique needs of our jurisdictions to provide temporary or intermediate spaces for individuals experiencing homelessness, permanent affordable homes or permanent supportive housing.

With your commitment, we can capitalize on the work together to bring thousands of residents experiencing homelessness inside to safe spaces.

Sincerely,



Executive Dow Constantine
King County



Commissioner Lisa Jannicki, Chair
Skagit County



Mayor Seth Fleetwood
City of Bellingham



Mayor Greg Wheeler
City of Bremerton



Mayor Cassie Franklin
City of Everett



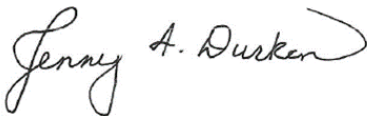
Mayor Penny Sweet
City of Kirkland



Mayor Cheryl Selby
City of Olympia



Mayor Kate Dexter
City of Port Angeles



Mayor Jenny Durkan
City of Seattle



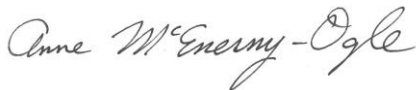
Mayor Victoria Woodards
City of Tacoma



Mayor Nadine Woodward
City of Spokane



Mayor Pete Kmet
City of Tumwater



Mayor Anne McEnery-Ogle
City of Vancouver



Council President Breann Beggs
City of Spokane



Council President Lorena González
City of Seattle



Councilmember Lisa Herbold
City of Seattle



Councilmember Debora Juarez
City of Seattle



Councilmember Andrew Lewis
City of Seattle



Councilmember Tammy Morales
City of Seattle



Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda
City of Seattle



Councilmember Alex Pedersen
City of Seattle



Councilmember Kshama Sawant
City of Seattle



Councilmember Lindsey Schromen-Wawrin
City of Port Angeles