



Seattle Human Rights Commission

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Seattle Human Rights Commission
810 Third Avenue, Suite 750, Seattle, WA, 98104
(206) 684-4540
December 15, 2025

RE: Support and Urgent Passage of Ordinance Prohibiting Discrimination Based on Family and Relationship Structure

Dear Seattle City Council Members,

The Seattle Human Rights Commission writes to express strong support for, and a sense of urgency around, the proposed City of Seattle ordinance prohibiting discrimination in real estate transactions, employment, and the provision of goods, facilities, and services on the basis of family and relationship structure. This legislation represents a necessary and timely evolution of Seattle's long-standing commitment to equity, dignity, and civil rights for all residents.

Seattle has long positioned itself as a city that leads with values. Yet our existing anti-discrimination framework was largely built at a time when only a narrow definition of family and relationship was recognized. As a result, many Seattle residents remain vulnerable to real and material harm. People in multi-parent or multi-partner families, multi-generational households, chosen families, single parents, intentionally single individuals, and those in consensually non-monogamous, asexual, or aromantic relationships continue to face discrimination in housing, employment, and public life simply because their family structures fall outside outdated norms.

This ordinance directly addresses that gap. By explicitly recognizing family and relationship structure as a protected class, the City affirms that safety, housing stability, employment access, and public participation should not depend on whether someone's life fits a traditional mold. The proposed amendments do not create special treatment. They ensure equal treatment, closing loopholes that currently allow exclusion, harassment, and denial of opportunity to persist unchecked.

The urgency of this legislation cannot be overstated. Discrimination in housing and employment has cascading impacts. It destabilizes families, limits economic mobility, and undermines public trust in institutions meant to serve all residents. In a city facing overlapping crises in housing affordability, displacement, and economic inequality, failure to act leaves many families with fewer protections precisely when they need them most.

Importantly, this ordinance is carefully constructed to integrate with existing sections of the Seattle Municipal Code. It strengthens, rather than complicates, enforcement by aligning family and relationship structure protections with already established civil rights frameworks administered by the Office for Civil Rights. In doing so, it provides clarity for residents, employers, housing providers, and City departments alike.

Seattle has repeatedly affirmed that our diversity is a strength. Importantly, Seattle would not be acting alone. Multiple U.S. cities have already adopted similar nondiscrimination protections recognizing family and relationship structure, including Somerville and Cambridge, Massachusetts, as well as Oakland and Berkeley, California. These municipalities have affirmed that modern family realities deserve explicit civil rights protections and have done so without disruption to existing enforcement systems. Seattle now has the opportunity to join this growing cohort of cities that are aligning local law with lived reality and established civil rights principles.

Passing this ordinance is an opportunity to translate that principle into concrete, enforceable protections. It signals that our city recognizes the lived realities of its residents and is willing to modernize its laws accordingly.

The Commission urges the City Council to move swiftly to adopt this ordinance and to do so with clarity and resolve. Delaying action prolongs harm and sends the message that some families remain optional in our civil rights protections. Seattle can and should do better.

Thank you for your leadership and your continued commitment to equity, dignity, and justice for all who call Seattle home. The Seattle Human Rights Commission looks forward to partnering with the City Council to advance and pass this timely and landmark ordinance, and to ensure its successful implementation in service of Seattle residents.

Sincerely,

Seattle Human Rights Commission

Co-signed,

Seattle LGBTQ Commission
December 18, 2025

Seattle Renters' Commission
March 4, 2026