



City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

Kim McGillivray & Daniel Godfrey, Co-Chairs

October 20, 2023

RE: Fund Office of Rental Housing Standards Tenant Workgroup

Dear Seattle City Council & Office of the Mayor:

The Seattle Renters' Commission strongly recommends that the City allocate \$50,000 for a tenant workgroup composed of two eviction defense attorneys, two tenant organizers, and three renters appointed by the Seattle Renters Commission to create an implementation strategy and propose legislation for the establishment of an Office of Rental Housing Standards (ORHS) to protect health, well-being, and rights of renters, who now make up more than half of Seattle's population. We also recommend that the workgroup allocate a portion of the \$50,000 to language access and tenant stipends to ensure that the renters most impacted by housing injustice are able to provide insight and feedback prior to the publication of the final report.

In 2021, only five fines were issued from the 3,285 complaints and questions filed by renters with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI). This highlights the contrast between the hardships experienced by renters and the repercussions experienced by landlords. By creating an Office of Rental Housing Standards, we can ensure that renters have the right to safe housing and justice through comprehensive investigations and robust enforcement mechanisms.

Seattle's housing affordability crisis continues to worsen, with wage stagnation and cost of living increases resulting in an ever-growing number of renters facing displacement or homelessness with just a missed paycheck or two. When landlords violate the rights of renters, including forcing them to pay for substandard or dangerous housing or else face eviction, our current system provides for no timely and just resolution.

For all those people who are still waiting for their landlords to fix problems with dangerous mold, lack of heat or water, pests, broken locks on doors, and so much more, the time for this is well past due.



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We eagerly anticipate your support for this crucial work and stand ready to collaborate in any way possible to see this project come to fruition. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

The Seattle Renters' Commission

Cc: Jennifer Chao, Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods
Seattle Office of Housing, Seattle Office of Civil Rights, Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections