



City of Seattle

Seattle Renters' Commission

August 3, 2026

Seattle Renters' Commission Letter Urging Seattle City Council to Ban Rental Junk Fees

Dear Seattle City Councilmembers:

The Seattle Renters' Commission urges City Council to ban rental junk fees. Often hidden in long lease agreements, junk fees can be ascribed to basic rental practices or even services that renters do not want or use to increase landlords' revenue without increasing advertised rents. They exploit renters for maximum profit, causing increased hardship for our most vulnerable populations.

Our Commission has heard time and time again from renters who are charged junk fees for both basic landlord responsibilities and services they neither want nor use. "Lease renewal," "in-unit appliance," and "common room" fees allow predatory landlords to charge extra each month or year for things that tenants reasonably expect will be covered by their rent. Some landlords require renters to pay for "valet trash," regardless of whether renters use the service or take out their own; while others charge for a mandatory "technology package," which forces renters to pay for landlord-provided internet, which may be significantly slower or less reliable than alternatives. Even fees for pets take advantage of the emotional connection renters have with their animal companions, especially considering tenants are still charged directly for damages or risk having that debt sent to collections.

Junk fees exploit renters that are already struggling to get by. It's no secret that Seattle is becoming less and less affordable: while the [median rent in 2000](#) was around \$630 ([equivalent](#) to \$1,250 in 2026), the [median rent today](#) is \$2,241. Nearly half of all Seattle renters (48%) now pay more than a third of their monthly income on rent, and one in four pays [more than half](#). For already cost-burdened renters, hidden fees can take housing costs from barely manageable to unsustainable, and can even follow renters for years: if the surprise costs lead to debt or eviction, it can be harder to find a place to live, to not being able to get financing to buy a vehicle, to being screened out of certain jobs.

Unfortunately, renters often learn about these fees, which can total hundreds of dollars, when they receive their lease, as hidden junk fees allow dishonest landlords to advertise rents significantly lower than what they will actually charge. At this point, renters may have to choose between agreeing to housing costs that were not disclosed up front or forfeiting hundreds of dollars more already paid in application fees and holding deposits.¹ Complicated leases with multiple addenda can even cause the average renter to miss charges that are buried deep within the documents, causing even more hardship.

The clear enforcement mechanisms proposed in the bill introduced by Councilmember Foster are crucial to its efficacy. As the City struggles to keep up with reviewing violations of other tenant protections, this bill gives the City Attorney the power to hold dishonest landlords accountable and ensures consequences for violators. The bill's simplicity—clearly listing the

¹ Landlords who charge a holding fee have complete control over the terms of that fee's return, per RCW 59.18.253

fees that are and are not allowed—makes it easy for tenants to know their rights and for landlords to follow them, including ensuring access to the paperwork they need to comply.

Further, Amendment 1, proposed by Councilmember Rinck, vitally closes a loophole that would allow landlords to “bundle” optional fees together. This Amendment ensures tenants who opt into one optional service offered are not forced to pay for other undesirable or unused services.

The bill is critical to ensuring renters have accurate information about housing, honest landlords can compete in a fair market, and that new protections are enforceable. We ask the City Council to pass this ban on rental junk fees with Amendment 1 and without any weakening amendments.

Sincerely,

Seattle Renters' Commission