

**From:** [Alexandra Deas](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Written Comments RE VSHSL  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 12:34:21 PM

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Dear Members of the King County Regional Policy Committee,

On behalf of Washington's Equal Justice Coalition, I write to urge you to vote to renew and increase to 15 cents the proposed King County Veterans Seniors and Human Services Levy (VSHSL). to better meet our community's current and increased needs. We see increased needs across the region. The VSHSL is King County's primary source of funding for services to support our elders, children, people with disabilities, and people who need homes, as well as to invest in preventing gender-based violence, hunger, and homelessness. As elected leaders in our region, we look to you to help meet these needs through judicious use of revenue tools and careful stewardship of public resources. To renew at the same rate as six years ago would be to ignore the result of rising costs of doing business in King County, steep inflation, increased housing and health care costs, and the loss of one-time federal COVID-19 relief funds. we urge you to ensure that community-based agencies in your neighborhood, city, and the county as a whole can do our work.

We must not slip further behind. But keeping the levy at the same rate while everything – costs to build and operate housing, to pay skilled staff, to purchase food, keep utilities on, pay rent and insurance keeping flat funding will means we \*will\* lose ground.

Funding the levy at a flat rate will reduce the number of supportive housing by half and reduce services to support people in their homes by 45%. In a community that is facing a severe housing and homelessness crisis we cannot afford to reduce our shared commitment to create homes and help people stay housed. Costs to build and operate housing and provide services have increased dramatically and are projected to continue to rise. A renewed levy should at a minimum continue to produce as much housing and support as many households. Facts are facts: A flat rate renewal will reduce services across the board and cause us to step backwards on housing our neighbors. We have specific concerns about the following amendments: 6D to S1, 7 to S1, and 7.1 to S1. Organizations throughout King County that provide services funded through the VSHSL experience the real effects of inflation. The costs of doing business are increasing, and agencies are currently unable to pay their employees livable wages.

According to the University of Washington's recent Wage Equity Study, 2022-2023 <https://socialwork.uw.edu/wageequitystudy>, there is a 37% gap in what human services workers are paid compared to comparable private sector positions A cap on administrative costs will only worsen this gap in wages, and will disproportionately affect smaller community organizations, and those that are focused on serving BIPOC and other historically marginalized and under-resourced people. We also have concerns about amendment 6D to S1 about how the funds are allocated. We do not see a need to restructure how the funds are allocated: The VSHSL is about serving the people across the whole region, and it is necessary for the 39 jurisdictions and unincorporated King County to collaborate, plan, and share implementation to address issues that extend beyond local borders.

In our recommendation to increase the VSHSL renewal to 15 cents, we draw your attention to the fact that the difference for the average homeowner between a flat renewal and a renewal that

would help maintain, strengthen, and increase services is about \$40 a year. That is less than a dollar a month. We recommend the following:

- Add 1 cent to maintain current housing production and supportive services;
- Add 1 cent to invest in more equitable wages for the human services workers we rely on to implement every aspect of the VSHSL;
- 1 cent to continue to serve veterans, seniors, and resilient communities at existing levy-supported programs across the county; and
- Add 2 cents to begin to meet the increased need we feel, see, hear, and witness daily.

We want to start to address the increased need for housing, homelessness, food security, gender-based violence, legal services. We think you do as well. In order to do this, we call on you to make the necessary investments through this levy, which will serve us through 2029.

Sincerely,

**Alexandra Deas** (*she/her/hers*)  
Communications & Advocacy Director  
Equal Justice Coalition | Legal Foundation of Washington



1325 Fourth Avenue, Suite 1335, Seattle, WA 98101  
[www.legalfoundation.org](http://www.legalfoundation.org)

**From:** [Amarinthia Torres](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Be Bold: Urge you to increase the rate of VSHSL for gender-based violence survivors!  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 9:49:33 AM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)

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Good morning to the members of the Regional Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to share my comments today. My name is Amarinthia Torres and I am here on behalf of the [Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence](#). We work with over 35 community-based and BIPOC led organizations throughout King County who support victims and survivors of gender-based violence such as sexual assault, trafficking and domestic violence.

**I am speaking today in support of increasing the rate for the Vets, Seniors, and Human Services Levy (VSHSL).**

The current straight line renewal at **\$0.10 per \$1000 of assessed value given the inflation and increased operating costs we have experienced over the last six years will not allow us to fully maintain the current level of gender-based violence services**, let alone begin to address the skyrocketing demand for services in our community.

The Vets, Seniors and Human Services Levy is the County's only dedicated source of funding supporting the diverse needs of domestic violence survivors when they courageously reach out for support, either through the countywide 24-hour, multi-lingual hotline or through all the other VSHSL funded domestic and sexual violence programs. Additionally, this funding is foundational to many other supports that survivors rely on, such as housing stability, violence prevention, and services for survivors who are also veterans or seniors.

We know it is critical that this levy pass *and* we believe that a few pennies more to care for our most vulnerable neighbors is worth it. You have an opportunity to meaningfully invest in proven service models through the VSHSL.

**We urge you to be bold and increase the rate of the Vets Seniors and Human Services Levy.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Amarinthia Torres**  
**Policy Advocacy Specialist**

Pronouns: she/her

[www.endgv.org](http://www.endgv.org)

(o) 206-568-5454



*Working together for gender equity and social justice in King County*

**From:** [Chrissy Shimizu](#)  
**To:** [Von Reichbauer, Pete](#); [Balducci, Claudia](#); [Dembowski, Rod](#); [mayor@redmond.gov](mailto:mayor@redmond.gov); [james.mcneal@bothellwa.gov](mailto:james.mcneal@bothellwa.gov); [Stokes, John](#); [Andrew.Lewis@seattle.gov](mailto:Andrew.Lewis@seattle.gov); [Kshama.Sawant@seattle.gov](mailto:Kshama.Sawant@seattle.gov); [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Yordanos Teferi](#); [shiku](#)  
**Subject:** Support for increasing VSHSL and adding EDI  
**Date:** Friday, March 31, 2023 12:23:19 PM  
**Attachments:** [Outlook-i3f30m5e.png](#)  
[Letter to RPC from Sage and MCC on VSHSL.pdf](#)

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Dear King County Regional Policy Committee,

Please find attached a letter from Multicultural Community Coalition and Puget Sound Sage regarding the VSHSL.

We strongly support increasing the VSHSL well above the 10 cents proposed by the Executive, as well as support adding the future Equitable Development Initiative as an eligible expenditure of levy dollars.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,  
Christina Shimizu

## Christina Reiko Shimizu

she/her

Executive Director

[Puget Sound Sage](#)

[chrissy@pugetsoundsage.org](mailto:chrissy@pugetsoundsage.org) | c: (206) 552-5508



**From:** [Ian Mosher](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Increase the rate to Vets Seniors Levy!  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 12:36:24 PM

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I am writing in support of increasing the rate of the Vets Seniors and Human Services Levy to \$0.15.

I am a home owner in South Seattle, in Councilmember Zahilay's district.

This levy supports the human service needs of the county, ensures that we have domestic violence advocates for victims, allows seniors to age in place, prevents homelessness amongst vets, supports immigrant communities, and helps to prevent violence in our communities (and more).

I am excited to pay 5¢ more (which is less than a \$1 a week in my annual property taxes) as a homeowner to ensure that the people that make our county livable, safe, and thriving for all residents, not just the rich ones, can live themselves in this expensive city. That we can continue to grow these programs as our population grows, and improve them to serve more people, more deeply.

Please move forward with more funding for in this levy to improve the lives of these most vulnerable folks.

Thanks,  
Ian Mosher

**From:** [Jack Edgerton](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Comments on the Veterans, Seniors & Human Services Levy  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 1:09:34 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)

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Dear Members of the King County Regional Policy Committee,

On behalf of the people we serve in King County, and our staff, Board members, and generous private donors, I write to urge you to vote to renew and increase to \$.15 the proposed King County **Veterans Seniors and Human Services Levy (VSHSL)** to better meet our community's increased needs. We see increased needs across the region. The VSHSL is King County's primary source of funding for services to support our veterans, elders, children, people with disabilities, and people who need homes, as well as to invest in preventing gender-based violence, hunger, and homelessness. As elected leaders in our region, we look to you to help meet these needs through judicious use of revenue tools and careful stewardship of public resources.

To renew at the same rate as six years ago would be to ignore the result of rising costs of doing business in King County, steep inflation, increased housing and health care costs, and the loss of one-time federal COVID-19 relief funds. We urge you to ensure that community-based agencies in your neighborhood, city, and the county as a whole can do our work.

We must not slip further behind. For example, funding the levy at a flat rate will reduce the number of supportive housing by half, and reduce services to support people in their homes by 45%. In a community that is facing a severe housing and homelessness crisis we cannot afford to reduce our shared commitment to create homes and help people stay housed. Costs to build and operate housing and provide services have increased dramatically and are projected to continue to rise. A renewed levy should at a minimum continue to produce as much housing and support as many households. Facts are facts: **A flat rate renewal will reduce services across the board and cause us to step backwards on housing our neighbors.**

We have specific concerns about the following current proposed amendments: 6D to S1, 7 to S1, and 7.1 to S1. Organizations throughout King County that provide services funded through the VSHSL are experiencing the real effects of inflation. The costs of doing business are increasing, and agencies are falling farther behind on being able to pay their employees livable wages.

According to the University of Washington's recent Wage Equity Study, 2022-2023

<https://socialwork.uw.edu/wageequitystudy>, there is a 37% gap in what human services workers are paid compared to comparable private sector positions. A cap on administrative costs will only worsen this gap in wages, and will disproportionately affect smaller community organizations, and those that are focused on serving BIPOC and other historically marginalized and under-resourced people. We also have concerns about amendment 6D to S1 about how the funds are allocated. We do not see a need to restructure how the funds are allocated: The VSHSL is about serving the people across the whole region, and it is necessary for the 39 jurisdictions and unincorporated King County to collaborate, plan, and share implementation to address issues that extend beyond local borders.

In our recommendation to increase the VSHSLK renewal to \$.15, we draw your attention to the fact that the difference for the average homeowner between a flat renewal and a renewal that would help maintain, strengthen, and increase services is about \$40 a year. We recommend the following:

- Add \$.01 to maintain current housing production and supportive services;
- Add \$.01 to invest in more equitable wages for the human services workers we rely on to implement every aspect of the VSHSL;
- \$.01 to continue to serve veterans, seniors, and resilient communities at existing levy-supported programs across the county; and

- Add \$.02 to begin to meet the increased need we feel, see, hear, and witness daily.

We want to start to address the increased need for housing, homelessness, food security, gender-based violence, legal services. We think you do as well. In order to do this, we call on you to make the necessary investments through this levy, which will serve us through 2029.

Jack Edgerton  
KidVantage

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**Jack Edgerton**  
(He/Him)  
Executive Director  
425.865.0234

EASTSIDE BABY CORNER IS NOW



**Join KidVantage and *Spring into Action* for kids!**

**See ways you can unlock the potential of child this spring by visiting:**  
[www.KidVantageNW.org/events](http://www.KidVantageNW.org/events)

Celebrate Read Across America Day, March 2<sup>nd</sup> 2023, and open the world for a child by donating a book!

P.S. EBC is now **KidVantage!** Our name has changed -- our mission is the same. Visit <https://kidvantenw.org/eastside-baby-corner/> to learn more, and to watch a video message from founder Karen Ridlon.

**From:** [Jhaki Gonsalvez](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment on Vets, Seniors and Human Services Levy  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 12:30:21 PM  
**Attachments:** [image001.png](#)  
[image002.png](#)  
[image003.png](#)

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Good afternoon Members of the Regional Policy Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. My name is Jhaki Gonsalvez and I am the Director of the DVHopeline at New Beginnings – Ending Domestic Violence.

**I am speaking today in support of increasing the rate for the Vets, Seniors, and Human Services Levy. The current 10 cent rate is just simply not enough to sustain the current level of services, let alone begin to address the skyrocketing demand for domestic violence services we are seeing in our region.**

The DVHopeline is the countywide, 24-hour, multi-lingual, multi-modal domestic violence helpline for survivors seeking safety. We offer emotional support, safety planning, dv education, crisis intervention, and linkage to community resources by completing electronic referrals to dv specific organizations.

The Vets, Seniors and Human Services Levy is the County’s only dedicated source of funding supporting the diverse needs of domestic violence survivors when they courageously reach out for support via the Hopeline. The DV Hopeline received 16,000 calls or texts and referred nearly 7,000 of those callers to additional support between mid-2021 and September 2022. We continue to grow and look forward to adding answering the phones for other dv helpline. In addition, we need more funding to ensure that we reach those that experience the most systemic barrier, including the BIPOC, immigrant, and LGBTQ+ communities.

Additionally, this funding is foundational to many other supports that survivors rely on, such as housing stability, violence prevention, and services for survivors who are also veterans or seniors.

We are one link in the chain in creating a more equitable, harm reduction world. This is an opportunity to meaningfully invest in these types of care and support and its why we urge you to increase the rate of the Vets Seniors and Human Services Levy.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Jacqueline “Jhaki” Gonsalvez, LMSW**

**Director of DVHopeline**

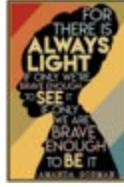
*(pronouns: she/her)*

(206) 737-0243

[www.dvhopeline.org](http://www.dvhopeline.org)

**DVHopeline helpline: 206-737-0242**

PO Box 75125, Seattle, WA 98175



**From:** [Jorge L. Barón](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#); [Balducci, Claudia](#); [Dembowski, Rod](#); [Von Reichbauer, Pete](#); [kshama.sawant@seattle.gov](mailto:kshama.sawant@seattle.gov); [Herbold, Lisa](#)  
**Subject:** VSHSL renewal - RPC meeting  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 1:38:51 PM

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Dear members of the Regional Policy Committee,

I am writing on behalf of Northwest Immigrant Rights Project (NWIRP) in regard to today's meeting of the committee.

Our organization would like to express our strong support for you to vote to renew the Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy (VSHSL) at today's meeting. We also join the call of our partners in several human services coalitions for you to increase the rate of the levy to 15 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value or as high a number as possible, in order to maximize the resources available to address the substantial needs we see in the community and the significant growth in the costs of providing those services.

In our recommendation to increase the VSHSL renewal to 15 cents, we draw your attention to the fact that the difference for the average homeowner between a flat renewal and a renewal that would help maintain, strengthen, and increase services is about \$40 per year. That is less than a dollar a month. We also support the recommendation from our coalition partners that the increased amount be allocated as follows:

- Add .01 cent to maintain current housing production and supportive services;
- Add .01 cent to invest in more equitable wages for the human services workers we rely on to implement every aspect of the VSHSL;
- .01 cent to continue to serve veterans, seniors, and resilient communities at existing levy-supported programs across the county; and
- Add .02 cents to begin to meet the increased need we feel, see, hear, and witness daily.

Thank you for your consideration,

Jorge L. Barón  
Executive Director  
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

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Jorge L. Barón (*he/him/his*) | Executive Director | [Northwest Immigrant Rights Project](#)  
615 Second Ave., Suite 400, Seattle, WA 98104 | email: [jorge@nwirp.org](mailto:jorge@nwirp.org)  
Direct: (206) 957-8609 | Fax: (206) 587-4025 | [www.nwirp.org](http://www.nwirp.org)

If you need assistance from Northwest Immigrant Rights Project, we encourage you to contact us by phone. If you are not already a client, click [here](#) for more information on how to reach us at the office closest to you.

*Si necesita ayuda del proyecto para los derechos del inmigrante del noroeste, le recomendamos que se comuniqué con nosotros por teléfono. Si aún no es cliente, haga clic [aquí](#) para obtener más información sobre cómo comunicarse con nosotros*

*en la oficina más cercana a usted.*

**From:** [Laura Smith](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** VSHSL Commentary  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 12:57:33 PM  
**Attachments:** [VSHSL letter.pdf](#)

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Hi,

Please find comment related to the VSHSL attached.

Thank you for your leadership.

Laura

Laura Smith (she/her)  
Executive Director  
Empower Youth Network  
O: 425-333-6614  
[laura@empoweryouthnetwork.org](mailto:laura@empoweryouthnetwork.org)  
[www.empoweryouthnetwork.org](http://www.empoweryouthnetwork.org)

**From:** [Merril Cousin](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** pass increased VSHSL at a rate of 15 cents  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 12:57:30 PM  
**Attachments:** [image002.png](#)

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Dear Members of the King County Regional Policy Committee,

On behalf of our 30+ member programs, and the thousands of survivors of sexual and domestic violence they serve every year, I am writing to urge you to vote to **renew the proposed King County Veterans Seniors and Human Services Levy (VSHSL) at an increased rate of 15 cents**. An expanded levy is critical to continue and expand life-saving services in your communities.

The **VSHSL is King County's primary source of dedicated funding** for services to support our elders, children, people with disabilities, survivors of violence, and people who need homes, as well as to invest in preventing gender-based violence, hunger, and homelessness. To renew at the same rate as six years ago would be to ignore steep inflation, increased housing and health care costs, and exponentially increasing demand for services. **We urge you to ensure that community-based agencies in your neighborhood, city, and the county as a whole can do their work.**

We must not slip further behind. But keeping the levy at the same rate while everything – costs to build and operate housing, to pay skilled staff, to purchase food, keep utilities on, pay rent and insurance – keeping flat funding will mean we *\*will\** lose ground. It is not enough to guarantee that levy-funded domestic violence, sexual assault, and trafficking organizations will be able to maintain the level of services they are currently providing.

We have specific concerns about the following amendments: **6D to S1, 7 to S1, and 7.1 to S1**. Organizations throughout King County are currently unable to pay their employees livable wages. A cap on administrative costs will only worsen this gap in wages, and will disproportionately affect smaller community organizations, especially those that are focused on serving BIPOC and other historically marginalized and under-resourced people. We also do not see a need to restructure how the funds are allocated: The VSHSL is about serving the people across the whole region, and it is necessary for the 39 jurisdictions and unincorporated King County to collaborate, plan, and share implementation to address issues that extend beyond local borders. Dividing the funds between so many jurisdictions will further fragment services and decrease in fact leave more people behind.

In our recommendation to increase the VSHSLK renewal to 15 cent which is about \$40 a year. That is less than a dollar a week. We need you to:

- Add 1 cent to maintain current housing production and supportive services;
- Add 1 cent to invest in more equitable wages for the human services workers we rely on to implement every aspect of the VSHSL;
- Add 1 cent to continue to serve veterans, seniors, survivors of gender-based violence, and other resilient communities at existing levy-supported programs across the county; and
- Add 2 cents to begin to meet the skyrocketing demand for services we feel, see, hear, and witness daily.

We want to start to address the increased need for housing, homelessness, food security, gender-based violence, and legal services. We think you do as well. In order to do this, we call on you to

make the necessary investments through this levy, which will serve us through 2029.

Sincerely,



**Merril Cousin**

*Executive Director*

*Pronouns: She/her*

*1419 S. Jackson St. #103*

*Seattle, WA 98144*

*206.568.5454*



*Working together for gender equity and social justice in King County*

**From:** [Mike Heinisch](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** VSHS Levy Item, Regional Policy Committee April 3 2023  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 12:50:38 PM  
**Attachments:** [VSHSL RPC Written Comment April 3 2023.docx](#)

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Thank you for recording my comments.

Mh

Michael Heinisch

**From:** [Sara Robbins](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Cc:** [Alison Eisinger](#); [Jody Rauch](#)  
**Subject:** VSHSL Written Testimony 04/03/2023 RPC Meeting  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 12:34:09 PM  
**Attachments:** [2023 0403 SKCCH Written Testimony RPC.pdf](#)

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Good Afternoon Members of the Regional Policy Committee,

Attached is written testimony for today's RPC meeting regarding the renewal of the Veteran's Seniors and Human Services Levy. We ask that you renew and right size the levy to match what this community needs which is an increased levy.

Thank you,

**Sara Robbins** (she/her)

Senior Policy Manager, Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness

*We mobilize our community to challenge systemic causes of homelessness and advocate for housing justice. We envision a region that acts on a shared sense of responsibility to ensure that everyone has a home.*

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**From:** [NUHSA Staff](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Letter to RPC  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 1:05:22 PM

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Dear Members of the King County Regional Policy Committee,

On behalf of our North King County human services providers and partners, the North Urban Human Services Alliance (NUHSA) asks that you vote to renew and increase to 15 cents the proposed King County Veterans Seniors and Human Services Levy (VSHSL) rate to better meet current and increased needs.

The VSHSL is King County's primary source of funding for services to support our elders, children, people with disabilities, and people who need homes, as well as to invest in preventing gender-based violence, hunger, and homelessness. As elected leaders in our region, we look to you to help meet these needs through judicious use of revenue tools and careful stewardship of public resources. To renew at the same rate as six years ago would be to ignore the result of rising costs of doing business in King County, steep inflation, increased housing and health care costs, and the loss of one-time federal COVID-19 relief funds. We urge you to ensure that community-based agencies in your neighborhood, city, and the county as a whole can do our work.

We must not slip further behind. Keeping the levy at the same rate while everything else increases (costs to build and operate housing, pay for skilled staff, the purchase of food, utilities and insurance, etc.) will essentially result in a decrease of services. We will lose ground on the steps we have gained, and the services that folks depend on now will decrease.

Funding the levy at a flat rate will reduce the number of supportive housing by half and reduce services to support people in their homes by 45%. In a region that is facing a severe housing and homelessness crisis, we cannot afford to reduce our shared commitment to create homes and help people stay housed. Costs to build and operate housing and provide services have increased dramatically and are projected to continue to rise. A renewed levy should at a minimum continue to produce as much housing and support as many households. Facts are facts: a flat rate renewal will reduce services across the board and cause us to step backwards on housing our neighbors.

We have specific concerns about the following amendments: 7 to S1, and 7.1 to S1. Organizations throughout King County that provide services funded through the VSHSL experience the real effects of inflation. The costs of doing business are increasing, and agencies are currently unable to pay their employees livable wages.

According to the University of Washington's recent [Wage Equity Study, 2022-2023](#), there is a 37% gap in what human services workers are paid compared to comparable private sector positions. A cap on administrative costs will only worsen this gap in wages, and will disproportionately affect smaller community organizations and those that are focused on serving BIPOC and other historically marginalized and under-resourced people.

In our recommendation to increase the VSHSLK renewal to 15 cents, we draw your attention to the fact that the difference for the average homeowner between a flat renewal and a renewal that would help maintain, strengthen, and increase services is about \$40/year. That is less than a dollar a month. We recommend the following:

- Add 1 cent to maintain current housing production and supportive services;
- Add 1 cent to invest in more equitable wages for the human services workers we rely on to implement every aspect of the VSHSL;
- Add 1 cent to continue to serve veterans, seniors, and resilient communities at existing levy-supported programs across the county; and
- Add 2 cents to begin to meet the increased need we feel, see, hear, and witness daily.

We want to start to address the increased needs for housing, shelter, homelessness support, food security, and supports around gender-based violence and access to legal services. We think you do as well. In order to do this, we call on you to make the necessary investments through this levy, which will serve us through 2029.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Board & Staff of NUHSA

--

Silje Sodal, MPH  
Executive Director  
NUHSA (North Urban Human Services Alliance)  
P.O. Box. 60215  
Shoreline, WA 98160

**From:** [Steve Daschle](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Legislative Clerks \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Testimony  
**Date:** Monday, April 3, 2023 1:11:08 PM  
**Attachments:** [image004.png](#)

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Dear Members of the King County Regional Policy Committee,

On behalf of the people we serve in King County, and our staff, Board members, and generous private donors, I write to urge you to vote to renew and increase to 15 cents the proposed King County Veterans Seniors and Human Services Levy (VSHSL). to better meet our community's current and increased needs. We see increased needs across the region. The VSHSL is King County's primary source of funding for services to support our elders, children, people with disabilities, and people who need homes, as well as to invest in preventing gender-based violence, hunger, and homelessness. As elected leaders in our region, we look to you to help meet these needs through judicious use of revenue tools and careful stewardship of public resources. To renew at the same rate as six years ago would be to ignore the result of rising costs of doing business in King County, steep inflation, increased housing and health care costs, and the loss of one-time federal COVID-19 relief funds. we urge you to ensure that community-based agencies in your neighborhood, city, and the county as a whole can do our work.

We must not slip further behind. But keeping the levy at the same rate while everything – costs to build and operate housing, to pay skilled staff, to purchase food, keep utilities on, pay rent and insurance keeping flat funding will means we will lose ground.

Funding the levy at a flat rate will reduce the number of supportive housing units by half, and reduce services to support people in their homes by 45%. In a community that is facing a severe housing and homelessness crisis we cannot afford to reduce our shared commitment to create homes and help people stay housed. Costs to build and operate housing and provide services have increased dramatically and are projected to continue to rise. A renewed levy should at a minimum continue to produce as much housing and support as many households. Facts are facts: A flat rate renewal will reduce services across the board and cause us to step backwards on housing our neighbors.

We have specific concerns about the following amendments: 6D to S1, 7 to S1, and 7.1 to S1. Organizations throughout King County that provide services funded through the VSHSL experience the real effects of inflation. The costs of doing business are increasing, and agencies are currently unable to pay their employees livable wages.

According to the University of Washington's recent Wage Equity Study, 2022-2023

<https://socialwork.uw.edu/wageequitystudy>, there is a 37% gap in what human services workers are paid compared to comparable private sector positions. A cap on administrative costs will only worsen this gap in wages, and will disproportionately affect smaller community organizations, and those that are focused on serving BIPOC and other historically marginalized and under-resourced people. We also have concerns about amendment 6D to S1 about how the funds are allocated. We do not see a need to restructure how the funds are allocated: The VSHSL is about serving the people across the whole regional, and it is necessary for the 39 jurisdictions and unincorporated King County to collaborate, plan, and share implementation to address issues that extend beyond local borders. In our recommendation to increase the VSHSLK renewal to 15 cents, we draw your attention to the fact that the difference for the average homeowner between a flat renewal and a renewal that

would help maintain, strengthen, and increase services is about \$40 a year. That is less than a dollar a month. We recommend the following:

- Add 1 cent to maintain current housing production and supportive services;
- Add 1 cent to invest in more equitable wages for the human services workers we rely on to implement every aspect of the VSHSL;
- 1 cent to continue to serve veterans, seniors, and resilient communities at existing levy-supported programs across the county; and
- Add 2 cents to begin to meet the increased need we feel, see, hear, and witness daily.

We want to start to address the increased need for housing, homelessness, food security, gender-based violence, legal services. We think you do as well. In order to do this, we call on you to make the necessary investments through this levy, which will serve us through 2029.

***Steve Daschle***

*(he/him pronouns)*

*Executive Director*



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*Together We're Better*  
Seattle Human Services Coalition