



Seattle/King County
Coalition on
Homelessness
HOMELESSINFO.ORG

Distributed to clerk of
BFM Committee meeting
on 7/26/17. Re: 2017-B0158

King County Executive Dow Constantine

King County Council Chair Joe McDermott;

Council Vice Chair Rod Dembowski; Council Vice Chair Reagan Dunn;

Councilmember Claudia Balducci; Councilmember Larry Gossett; Councilmember Jeanne Kohl-Welles;

Councilmember Kathy Lambert; Councilmember Pete von Reichbauer; Councilmember Dave Upthegrove

July 25, 2017

Dear Executive Constantine and Members of the King County Council:

I am writing to request that you dedicate funding to continue providing shelter and safety for our neighbors in the 420 Fourth Ave. building shelter through at least December 31, 2017. We can all be proud that King County has made good use of this otherwise-vacant county-owned building to provide shelter. Thanks to combined efforts, on December 26, 2015 the doors at 420 4th Ave. opened to welcome 50 people (and their pets) nightly. This shelter has been operating at capacity ever since, with people lining up to ensure they can get their spot each night. It was therefore startling and dismaying to learn late in June that there were plans to close the shelter at the end of that month. It is now my understanding that funding beyond July 31 is uncertain.

As you are all aware, after our community's shelters are full each night, thousands of King County residents of all ages still have nowhere safe to be. The January 2017 Point-in-Time Count found 5,485 people outside during just a few hours. Coalition members, allies, and volunteers will be working hard to persuade voters to approve the Veterans, Seniors, and Human Services Levy this November 7th. However, November 2, 2017 will mark two years since Mayor Ed Murray and Executive Dow Constantine declared a State of Emergency around Homelessness in Seattle and King County. No matter how you measure it, our community is still in the throes of this emergency. *It is unconscionable to consider closing the doors of the shelter King County opened just weeks after this declaration, and turning people away who bear the brunt of this crisis.*

Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness works collaboratively to ensure safety and survival for people who are homeless, and to end the crisis of homelessness in our region.

85 So. Washington St., Suite 310, Seattle, WA 98104 (206) 204.8350

We enthusiastically applaud and strongly support King County's work to identify publicly held land and buildings usable for temporary, interim, and permanent housing and shelter; the Council's designation of funds in the budget to create additional shelter; the opening of a new family shelter in White Center and the planned opening of a family shelter in Kenmore; and the commitment to address our region's critical lack of affordable housing, including housing for people with extremely low or no incomes, through the creation of a Regional Affordable Housing Task Force. We all must do much more to help and house people who are currently homeless, and to address the deep systemic problems, economic and social inequities, and raging affordable housing crisis that cause more people to become homeless.

As you assess progress to date on the Council's housing initiatives and discuss the use of public resources entrusted to you through the budget process, I urge you to bear in mind that our shared responsibility in this emergency is clear to add capacity to meet the needs of people in our community. This is not a zero sum situation. Closing a fifty person shelter to open another shelter for 50, 75, or 100 people is not a serious programmatic or policy response to a crisis of this scope. Please ensure continued operational support for as long as shelter is needed, and as long that building is not fully in use.

The Coalition and our members are eager to work with you, as always: to offer creative to offer creative ideas and problem-solving, practical knowledge and experience, and robust, unwavering commitment to the mission of helping and housing people in King County. We would rather focus on securing additional resources and ensuring quality services, and on collaboration with you to accomplish our many shared goals than on repeatedly drawing your attention to the need to sustain good work begun previously.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alison Eisinger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Alison Eisinger
Executive Director

cc: Adrienne Quinn, Director, Department of Community and Human Services
Mark Ellerbrook, Regional Housing and Community Development Manager, DCHS
Mark Putnam, Director, All Home