

**From:** [Lauren Fay](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Committee Assistants \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 6, 2020 11:25:14 AM

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Submitting on behalf of my colleague, David Helde in support of "Health through Housing".

To the King County Council,

My name is David Helde. I am a Shelter Case Manager at DESC and a union delegate for SEIU 1199NW. I certainly do not speak for either of those organizations in any official manner, but my experiences with both of them obviously informs my testimony today.

One of the mottoes at SEIU is that we are "Stronger Together." In fact, I would say that this principle is specifically what societies themselves are based on. Individual people banding together to bring their individual strengths into a group for their mutual and universal benefit is what civilization IS. Sometimes those skills and gifts are easy to see, and sometimes they aren't. But I would say that they always exist. Everybody has something to donate, something to teach, something of value. Everybody IS something of value. And our society has strayed from this basic concept, this basic fact. We have people today that we treat as throwaway people. We have people today that we treat as dispensable. If you doubt this, merely look at the list of unsheltered people that die outdoors kept by the Women in Black. If you doubt this, simply speak to anybody that works at DESC. Speak to one of the High Utilizer Case Managers at Harborview Medical Center or to a REACH employee or to countless other people that spend their days or nights trying to somehow make their time and compassion be enough to meet people's basic needs.

Our unsheltered neighbors deserve better than this, but the rest of society deserves better than this as well. We are currently missing out on the gifts that they have to give. They are missing out on the opportunity to meaningfully participate in society in the ways that you and I take for granted. Providing housing is the first step towards stability. And stability is the first step towards building a society that is truly inclusive. We have built a society where people cannot access housing (and I can tell you firsthand that there are far too many people that simply can NOT access housing due to the absolute dearth of low income and subsidized housing). As long as that is the case, we are allowing a caste system of "haves" and "have nots" to exist. It is systemic. And we are turning a blind eye to it because we are too lazy and uncaring to change it. This is one of those situations that can be accurately described as "It is not a bug. This is how the system was *designed*." Until we change that fundamental design of the system by creating widespread affordable housing, you, myself, and all of us, are at fault for allowing this to continue.

Thank you for your time.

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**David Helde**  
Housing Assistance Case Manager  
DESC's Main Shelter  
(he, him, his)

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[desc.org](http://desc.org)

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Working for justice.



October 6, 2020

King County Council  
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200  
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Members of the King County Council:

The Church Council of Greater Seattle organizes congregations and people of faith throughout King County to build local, sustainable and equitable communities. We have worked to address the human tragedy of homelessness in our county for 40 years. I urge your strong support for Ordinances 2020-0337 and 2020-0338. Chronic homelessness, especially in light of the pandemic, constitutes a life and death crisis for people without housing. County leadership rightly identified homelessness as an emergency several years ago. The opportunity to apply the sales and use tax of one-tenth of one percent to serve up to 2,000 individuals finally ramps up a proportionate response to a regional challenge.

The combination of supportive housing and permanently exiting homelessness is a recipe for thriving that works. Imagine addressing the triple threat of pandemic, economic dislocation and homelessness and racial and ethnic disproportionalities through one action by the county. These ordinances will be essential toward meeting the goals of the Affordable Housing Committee, the Regional Homelessness Authority and Pandemic and Racism Community Advisory Group, on each of which I am privileged to serve on behalf of the common good.

Thank you for your prompt attention for our neighbors experiencing homelessness.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Michael Ramos".

Michael Ramos  
Executive Director  
Church Council of Greater Seattle



October 5, 2020

King County Council  
516 Third Ave., Room 1200  
Seattle, WA 98104

To the Members of the King Council:

We are writing on behalf of the Sound Alliance in support of the new 0.1% tax to fund housing for chronically homeless people in King County.

Our base of 23 member organizations representing 35,000 individuals and families across the county have made access to housing a core issue for our work. In listening sessions within our member organizations, people have consistently expressed concern for themselves, their students and their neighbors who are struggling to pay rent, utilities and lack access to food for their families. All of this has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

Places for people to live in dignity is immensely important to finding a path to healing. One of the silver linings of the pandemic has been the increased access to hotel rooms for people who are homeless while they recover from the virus. This presented an opportunity to gain more stability and improve overall health for those people. This helps makes the case that housing is essential to human dignity and is a human right. The plan to include case management and wrap around services is heartening and essential to make sure people who have been homeless have the support they need to thrive.

We also believe these housing opportunities should be prioritized for the most vulnerable and focus initially on South King County where the needs are the greatest.

On behalf of our member organizations, we urge you to pass this tax proposal as part of the Budget presented by the County Executive.

Sincerely,

August Drake-Ericson  
St. Mary's, Seattle  
Strategy Team co-chair

Pastor Anna Reike  
St. John United Lutheran Church  
Strategy Team co-chair