

January 8, 2019

MEMORANDUM

To: Members of the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development & Arts Committee
From: Asha Venkataraman, Council Central Staff
Subject: Draft resolution regarding Council's plan to address harms from eviction

On January 8, 2019, the Civil Rights, Utilities, Economic Development & Arts Committee (CRUEDA) will discuss a draft resolution describing how Council intends to explore ways to avoid and mitigate harms to tenants and marginalized communities caused by evictions from housing. This memorandum describes the origin of the draft resolution and outline its contents.

Background

During 2018, the Housing Justice Project of the King County Bar Association (HJP) and the Seattle Women's Commission (SWC) researched court documents associated with eviction proceedings (known as unlawful detainers) in King County in 2017. The goal was to conduct "a deep analysis of eviction causes, processes, and outcomes" in Seattle.¹ At the September 21, 2018 CRUEDA meeting, HJP and SWC presented the results of their research, contained in the report "[Losing Home: The Human Cost of Eviction in Seattle](#)". The report made many findings regarding the type of tenant that is evicted, from where landlords were evicting tenants, the reasons for eviction, the factors leading to tenants facing eviction, the outcomes of eviction cases in Seattle, and how eviction impacts tenants. It also included recommendations in three major categories to ameliorate the negative impacts of the eviction process: (1) Make it possible to pay rent; (2) Improve the landlord-tenant relationship; and (3) Rebalance the scales of justice to even out the playing field for landlords and tenants.

In response to the report and its recommendations, Council took a variety of actions during the 2019-2020 budget process, including adopting statements of legislative intent for various City departments, providing funding to support tenant organizations, and including specific language in the City's 2019 State Legislative Agenda to support amendments to [RCW 59.18](#) that currently limits Seattle's ability to extend City-level just cause eviction protections to tenants at the end of their lease term and reforms the unlawful detainer process.

Draft Resolution

In its recitals, the draft resolution outlines many of the findings and recommendations in the *Losing Home* report and details the actions taken by the Council during the 2019-2020 budget process. The language of the draft resolution then describes the Council's commitment to exploring the strategies in the report and examining how legislative action can address the causes of eviction and associated harm to tenants and marginalized communities.

cc: Kirstan Arestad, Central Staff Director
Ketil Freeman, Supervising Analyst

¹ Seattle Women's Commission and the Housing Justice Project, "Losing Home: The Human Cost of Eviction in Seattle." September 2018.