

March 30, 2018

Council Member Mosqueda
600 4th Avenue
Seattle, WA 98104

Council Member Mosqueda,

Issues surrounding homelessness are daunting in themselves; compounded by experiencing a disability, homelessness can become an insurmountable challenge. *The Seattle/King County Point-In-Time Count of Persons Experiencing Homelessness 2017*¹ (PIT Count) identified 11,643 individuals experiencing homelessness in King County; 73% (8,476) of which were located in Seattle. The PIT Count makes several comparisons pointing out disparities between individuals experiencing homelessness and the overall populations of Seattle/King County but fails to mention the alarming disparity of 50% of persons experiencing homelessness also identify as a person experiencing disability (66%, two or more disabling conditions) as compared to overall population of individuals with disabilities in Seattle/King County, 6.3%² and 6.4%² respectively. Twenty-four percent (24%) of those surveyed in the count meet the Federal HUD definition of chronically homeless; a definition that includes “and has a disability”. These statistics are not startling to disability service organizations in Seattle/King County; however, what is startling is the lack of consideration of disability in Seattle/King County’s approach to homelessness programming.

Seattle is currently operating its homelessness programs under the “Pathways Home” initiative. It is labeled as “Seattle’s Person-Centered Plan to Support People Experiencing Homelessness”; however, while the plan outlines Seattle’s initiatives and action steps to address homelessness, there is only one mention of disability (highlighting a specific organizations units for chronically homeless). The plan does mention responses to mental health and substance abuse but does not consider or respond to the needs of people with disabilities, especially those with mental, physical and developmental disabilities. In using this approach, Seattle is not funding solutions that take disability into consideration; concepts of quality and effective programs do not consider how people with disabilities fare. Specific examples of this include:

- **Disabilities keep people out of shelters** - shelters are generally not accessible (stairs, no elevators, usually in old buildings so tiny hallways, etc.), staff in general seem to not be trained/can't handle special needs that accompany some disabilities, and usually there are no special or accessible spaces for people with profound mental illness and/or physical disabilities that may take up more space due to equipment needs (wheelchair, oxygen machine, service animal, etc.), or if there are spaces they're so rare that it's hard to get a hold of them.
- **Both physical and mental disabilities are discriminated against** - you can be kicked out of many shelters for violating rules, with no special consideration for the root issues of those rules or where differential treatment may be needed. An example of this is an individual who has a deafness/speaking disability and apparently scared a staff member at the shelter he frequented to the point they banned him. How is he supposed to access any services without staff support from the one place he feels welcome to meet his needs?

¹ <http://allhomekc.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/2017-King-PIT-Count-Comprehensive-Report-FINAL-DRAFT-5.31.17.pdf>

² <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/kingcountywashington,seattlecitywashington/PST045216>

- **Many disabled people tend to be heads of household, and have dependents** - this is especially important to consider, as there are many examples of individuals with extreme disabilities (multiple, chronic, and/or life-threatening if untreated) returning to a provider after being given all of the county-approved help and the provider needed turn them away because of family size. Disabilities affect people at every step in the homelessness/shelter-finding process, but even after housing has been attained, they tend to be the ones who lose support the quickest. While the city and county are working hard to end family homelessness, they tend to ignore the needs of families where one or more member is extremely rent-burdened due to healthcare needs and associated costs that can come with disabilities (for example, lack of or no ability to gain employment, and the limiting funding that comes with disability pay).
- **"Single adults" are singled out** - with some of the most intense disabilities, a caretaker is needed, but that nuance is erased from all Coordinated Entry for All (CEA) assessments. If that person is your child, then you are a family, even if you don't want or need family accommodations (usually extra funding towards childcare and the child's needs if they're under 18). If you are classified as a single adult, then your caretaker is not considered to be a part of your family or a necessary person for you to move in with, and you may have to turn down CEA housing offers due to your disability.
- **The flagging process for Disability needs through CEA** is not well-explained, and has lots of rules about what does and does not count as 'flaggable' for a disability. It also complicates what disabilities are given more systematic attention.
- **Disability check box on CEA form** is not used in the scoring process. An individual's score ranks their vulnerability. People deemed more vulnerable qualify for more intensive supports; people considered more vulnerable also move up the list. So someone with an intellectual disability doesn't get any "vulnerability points" in this system. They don't qualify for more intensive supports; they would stay lower on the list.
- **County- and city-wide measures meant to help fall very short** - for example, Path to Home/Diversion through CEA is very limited, has lots of paperwork and conditions that don't account for the severity of the situations most people are going through, and quite frankly the spiking prices of rent makes clients go farther out of the city for housing, which not only displaces them, but puts jobs/childcare/etc. at risk and makes coordinating paperwork with their landlords that much harder. This is not to mention that most housing funds for moving clients in, like Diversion and Section 8, tend to have strict time limits that are hard to reach when you are homeless.
- **Many city and county efforts focus on supporting client-landlord relations, when they should be pushing for higher taxes, rent control, and other systemic housing solutions** - ultimately, without some major changes that will affect how much housing is built and what types of units are built, things won't really change. Landlords tend to be very picky and demand their money upfront, but CEA tends to treat renting like a drawn-out process that can be negotiated over the course of a few days or weeks. It obscures the fact that this is the one housing option the client has chosen for themselves, and damages the relationship from the beginning by having the landlord be angry or confused at not getting money ASAP and usually not knowing what CEA even does.

There is an assumption that everyone has a baseline ability to navigate the housing support system and there is no systemic consideration of people who don't have those skills, let alone thought about universal design. From a system standpoint, Seattle is not tracking the needs of people with disabilities, not designing wraparound programs with them in mind, and not considering the barriers they face to achieve stable housing, or in finding suitable housing. People with disabilities, suffer the most from housing instability and homelessness. Ultimately, the system that is supposed to help the vulnerable becomes a barrier for some of our community's most marginalized and vulnerable people. We urge the City of Seattle to re-evaluate their approach to serving the needs of people with disabilities in their homelessness programs.

Sincerely,



Kimberly Meck
Director, Alliance of People with disAbilities
kimberly@disabilitypride.org



Ramona J Hattendorf (Mar 30, 2018)

Ramona Hattendorf
Director of Advocacy, the Arc of King County
RHattendorf@arcofkingcounty.org



Nicole Palczewski (Mar 30, 2018)

Nicole Palczewski
Commission for People with Disabilities
n.palczewsk12@gmail.com



ChrisTiana Obey (Mar 30, 2018)

ChrisTiana ObeySumner
Co-Chair, Commission for People with Disabilities
ChrisTianaObeySumner@gmail.com



Shaun Bickley (Mar 30, 2018)

Shaun Bickley
Co-Chair, Commission for People with Disabilities
(Also Alliance of People with Disabilities)
ShaunLBickley@gmail.com /
shaun@disabilitypride.org

Letter to Council Member











Adobe Sign Document History

03/30/2018




Created:	03/30/2018
By:	kimberly Heymann (kimberly@disabilitypride.org)
Status:	Signed
Transaction ID:	CBJCHCAABAfLUGU7m42p2R0mC36LbM4oOnASh4idwE

"Letter to Council Member" History

-  Document uploaded by kimberly Heymann (kimberly@disabilitypride.org) from Acrobat
03/30/2018 - 3:35:56 PM PDT - IP address: 70.102.202.10
-  Document emailed to Shaun Bickley (shaun@disabilitypride.org) for signature
03/30/2018 - 3:39:49 PM PDT
-  Document viewed by Shaun Bickley (shaun@disabilitypride.org)
03/30/2018 - 3:43:38 PM PDT - IP address: 24.18.216.29
-  Document e-signed by Shaun Bickley (shaun@disabilitypride.org)
Signature Date: 03/30/2018 - 3:44:26 PM PDT - Time Source: server- IP address: 24.18.216.29
-  Document emailed to christianaobeysummer@gmail.com for signature
03/30/2018 - 3:44:27 PM PDT
-  Email sent to christianaobeysummer@gmail.com bounced and could not be delivered
03/30/2018 - 3:44:39 PM PDT
-  kimberly Heymann (kimberly@disabilitypride.org) replaced signer christianaobeysummer@gmail.com with ChrisTiana Obey (ChrisTianaObeySumner@gmail.com)
03/30/2018 - 3:48:34 PM PDT - IP address: 70.102.202.10
-  Document emailed to ChrisTiana Obey (ChrisTianaObeySumner@gmail.com) for signature
03/30/2018 - 3:48:34 PM PDT
-  Email sent to christianaobeysummer@gmail.com bounced and could not be delivered
03/30/2018 - 3:48:39 PM PDT
-  Document viewed by ChrisTiana Obey (ChrisTianaObeySumner@gmail.com)
03/30/2018 - 3:49:28 PM PDT - IP address: 66.102.7.248

 Document e-signed by ChrisTiana Obey (ChrisTianaObeySumner@gmail.com)

Signature Date: 03/30/2018 - 3:50:09 PM PDT - Time Source: server- IP address: 67.170.77.204

 Document emailed to Nicole Palczewski (n.palczewsk12@gmail.com) for signature


03/30/2018 - 3:50:09 PM PDT

 Document viewed by Nicole Palczewski (n.palczewsk12@gmail.com)

03/30/2018 - 4:03:52 PM PDT- IP address: 66.249.84.217

 Document e-signed by Nicole Palczewski (n.palczewsk12@gmail.com)

Signature Date: 03/30/2018 - 4:05:03 PM PDT - Time Source: server- IP address: 207.108.221.122

 Document emailed to Ramona J Hattendorf (rhattendorf@arcofkingcounty.org) for signature

03/30/2018 - 4:05:03 PM PDT

 Document viewed by Ramona J Hattendorf (rhattendorf@arcofkingcounty.org)

03/30/2018 - 4:11:51 PM PDT- IP address: 209.210.201.252

 Document e-signed by Ramona J Hattendorf (rhattendorf@arcofkingcounty.org)

Signature Date: 03/30/2018 - 4:13:26 PM PDT - Time Source: server- IP address: 209.210.201.252