

# 2021 Seattle City Council Budget Action

Council Budget Action: Agenda

Tab	Action	Option	Version
SDCI	007	A	001

**Budget Action Title:** Add \$750,000 GF to SDCI for eviction legal defense

Ongoing: Yes Has Budget Proviso: No

Has CIP Amendment: No Has Attachment: No

Primary Sponsor: Kshama Sawant

Council Members: Tammy Morales, Lorena González

Staff Analyst: Ketil Freeman

Council Bill or Resolution:

Date		Total	LH	TM	KS	AP	DJ	DS	AL	TM	LG
	Yes	0									
	No	0									
	Abstain	0									
	Absent	0									

## Summary of Dollar Effect

See the following pages for detailed technical information

	2021 Increase (Decrease)	2022 Increase (Decrease)
<b>General Fund</b>		
<b>General Fund Revenues</b>	\$0	
<b>General Fund Expenditures</b>	\$750,000	
<b>Net Balance Effect</b>	<b>\$(750,000)</b>	
<b>Total Budget Balance Effect</b>	<b>\$(750,000)</b>	

## Budget Action Description:

This Council Budget Action would add \$750,000 GF to the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections to contract with a renter eviction defense organization, such as the Housing Justice Project (HJP) of the King County Bar Association, to provide free legal defense for any renter facing eviction in Seattle.

The HJP indicates that there are about 1,200 eviction court filings each year in Seattle, not counting unfiled evictions or pre-eviction notices. The HJP estimates that \$750,000 would fund an additional five attorneys and two paralegals, and would be sufficient to provide the right to council for renters facing eviction in Seattle. The Housing Justice Project estimates a 56 percent overall success rate since 2019 in keeping tenants housed, up from less than 24 percent two years ago when the Council began funding eviction legal defense. If this Council Budget Action is approved, Councilmember Sawant intends to develop for Council consideration legislation providing a right-to-counsel for renters facing eviction.

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Studies indicate that evictions could increase in 2021 as pandemic-related eviction moratoria expire.

In 2020, SDCI issued grants totaling \$340,000 to the Housing Justice Project and the Tenant Law Center to provide services including eviction defense. Those grants were funded, in part, by a one-time appropriation of \$230,000 GF.

## Budget Action Transactions

#	Transaction Description	Position Title	Number of Positions	FTE	Dept	BSL	Fund	Year	Revenue Amount	Expenditure Amount
1	Add appropriation for eviction legal defense		0	0	SDCI - CI000	SDCI - BO-CI-U2400 - Compliance	00100 - General Fund	2021	\$0	\$750,000