



City of Seattle

Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

June 18, 2021

Monica Martinez Simmons
Seattle City Clerk
600 4th Avenue, 3rd Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Ms. Martinez Simmons:

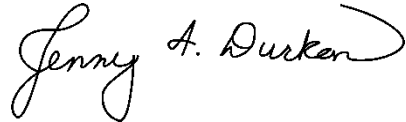
I have returned Council Bills 120046, 120077, and 120090 unsigned, understanding they will become law. I am concerned about and committed to protecting vulnerable tenants from evictions, particularly given the strains of the global COVID-19 pandemic. This is why I was one of the first elected officials in the country to put an eviction moratorium and rental assistance programs in place, as well as a range of food, childcare and small business supports. However, these bills are unlikely to actually protect tenants and are much more likely to subject the City to protracted, expensive and losing legal battles. This will drain valuable dollars that should go to helping residents and businesses still struggling.

To truly protect renters during this unprecedented time, I will be issuing another Executive Order that extends the Residential Eviction Moratorium through September 30, 2021. In the coming weeks, I will also transmit legislation to allocate an additional \$28.7 million of federal funding for rental assistance, totaling approximately \$75 million in rent relief and housing assistance since the beginning of the pandemic. This funding is over and above the hundreds of millions of dollars coming from the County and State for rent and housing relief, which will be distributed in the coming weeks to landlords and tenants. And is also separate from hundreds of millions of dollars in other direct relief, including unemployment benefits.

These actions provide actual protections for tenants and provide relief for many small landlords who also are facing tough economic times. In addition, the COVID Hardship bill, Ordinance 1260875, allows tenants to employ a defense against evictions for six months after the expiration of the Residential Eviction Moratorium if their inability to pay rent is due to financial hardship associated with COVID-19. This effectively guarantees that those residents hardest hit by the pandemic can remain in their homes through March 31, 2022, while the significant resources in rent relief will be targeted to making sure rent can be paid, renters stay out of debt and our smaller landlords do not face continued economic hardship or worse.

While we all have the same goals to prevent evictions, it is regrettable that City Council has passed these bills despite receiving legal advice that they are unlikely to withstand legal challenge. These bills will yet again open the City up to legal liability and costs, spending valuable City resources that could be better spent actually helping vulnerable tenants to remain in their housing. Unfortunately, given the vote margins by the Council a veto is not viable.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jenny A. Durkan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jenny A. Durkan
Mayor of Seattle