



January 12, 2023

Dear Seattle City Council Members and Mayor Harrell,

We are writing to urge you to pass legislation limiting late fees for renters to \$10 per month. In the past several years, five jurisdictions in King County have passed laws limiting late fees. The cities of Auburn and Burien have capped late fees at \$10 per month. Kenmore, Redmond, and unincorporated King County have capped late fees at 1.5% of monthly rent.

Currently, there is no state regulation on how much landlords can charge in late fees. Many landlords charge a flat rate of anywhere from \$50-200 and then a daily fee of \$5-50 until rent is paid in full, meaning if a tenant is even five or six days late on rent, they now owe an additional \$70-400. This sets renters up to drown in debt and makes it near impossible to catch up. Mistakes happen; there can be an accounting delay resulting in a late paycheck, or something goes awry with public benefits, or an unexpected expense comes up. If someone is unable to pay their rent on time, how can they pay steep fees on top of that?

The main impact of punitive late fees is to destroy a person's credit history; as state law stands, a renter cannot be evicted for late fees and the courts only require them to pay up to \$75 of late fees once an eviction process has started. The argument that limiting late fees will cause tenants to de-prioritize rent payments does not hold water. Even during a worldwide pandemic, with eviction moratoriums in place, renters [continued to prioritize rent](#) over medical bills, food, and other household necessities. As they say, "the rent eats first." All large late fees accomplish is punishing the most vulnerable members of our community even when they've gotten caught up on rent.

We ask you to match the high standard set by Auburn and Burien and cap late fees in Seattle at \$10 per month.

Sincerely,

Members of the Stay Housed Stay Healthy coalition:

350 Seattle
Be:Seattle
Eastside For All
Eastside Legal Assistance Program
El Centro de la Raza
Faith Action Network
Housing Justice Project
Housing Justice Work Group - Seattle DSA
InterIm CDA
Lake City Taskforce on Homelessness
LGBTQ Allyship
Nickelsville
Northshore Social Justice Action Group
North Urban Human Services Alliance (NUHSA)
PROTEC17
Queer The Land
Real Change
Resident & Fellow Physician Union - Northwest
SHARE (Seattle Housing and Resource Effort)
Share The Cities Organizing Collective
Solid Ground
Taking Black Pride SEA
Tenant Law Center
Transit Riders Union
Trans Women of Color Solidarity Network - House of Constance Project
Urban League of Metropolitan Seattle
Washington Build Back Black Alliance
Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility
Washington Working Families Party
WHEEL (Women's Housing Equality and Enhancement League)