



City of Seattle
Edward B. Murray
Mayor

April 19, 2016

Honorable Bruce A. Harrell, President
Seattle City Council
City Hall 2nd Floor

Dear Council President Harrell:

I am pleased to transmit the attached proposed legislation for your consideration in accordance with Council Resolution 31622, which adopted the work plan for implementing the City's Housing Affordability and Livability Agenda (HALA).

Last July, the HALA Advisory Committee published 65 recommendations for how we can make Seattle a more affordable, diverse and equitable city. Consistent with the Committee's report, I outlined my priorities in "*Housing Seattle: A Roadmap to an Affordable and Livable City*," which shares my vision for addressing our housing affordability crisis. Several of the recommendations in the HALA Advisory Committee's report, and also in my action plan, support strengthening protections for tenants.

This proposed legislation seeks to prevent residential displacement and create stronger legal protections for renters who are subject to living in unsafe or uninhabitable rental housing or experience other prohibited landlord-led actions. The Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections (SDCI) and my policy staff worked together with Councilmember Kshama Sawant to develop the legislation, which would amend the Seattle Municipal Code as follows:

1. Prohibit landlords from increasing the rents charged for dwelling units that do not meet basic maintenance standards;
2. Clarify and enhance protections for tenants who experience retaliation or other prohibited landlord-led actions;
3. Transfer primary City responsibility for enforcing against prohibited acts by landlords and tenants from the Seattle Police Department to SDCI; and
4. Enable SDCI to take enforcement action against landlords that do not provide required notice before applying a rent increase. Violations of this law are currently considered civil matters between landlords and tenants.

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More than half of Seattle's occupied housing units are rentals, and a disproportionate share of Seattle's renter households are low-income and from historically disadvantaged communities. As our local residential rental market grows increasingly competitive, many low-income tenants find themselves with limited housing choices and unable to afford to live in Seattle. The proposed legislation represents an effort to prevent displacement of low-income tenants and better protect tenants from landlords who do not properly maintain their properties.

Thank you for your consideration of this legislation, and if you have any questions, please contact Sara Belz at 684-8696. I look forward to working with you as we continue to tackle the housing affordability challenges facing Seattle residents.

Sincerely,



Edward B. Murray
Mayor, City of Seattle