

STATEMENT FROM WHEEL AND SHARE 2-27-19

On Tuesday, February 26th we learned the Mayor and the head of the Seattle Human Service Department intend to circumvent last fall's unanimous City Council decision to fund the SHARE/WHEEL indoor shelter network and the WHEEL low-barrier women's shelter for the next two years.

Instead, the Mayor and the head of the Human Service Department intend to fund our shelters **ONLY** for six months, with conditions. An additional six month's funding **MIGHT** be offered, pending some form of nebulous "performance improvements."

This completely negates City Council decision-making authority, and their **UNANIMOUS** vote in November, taken after an enormous amount of public testimony, coalition work and partnerships, faith community outcry, and public support for our necessary, community- building, empowering and life-saving work.

It's analogous to President Trump circumventing the US Congress's budget vote, declaring an unwarranted and unconstitutional "State of Emergency" to build a wall to keep refugees and poor people out of our country.

It's unwarranted based on our actual performance, and the goodness of our shelters:

- Our housing outcomes last year were better than many other basic shelter providers.
- Our self-managed and church-based model is unparalleled, building bridges of community and partnership all over the city, and developing leadership among participants.
- We deeply live out the City's own stated Race and Social Justice Equity initiatives, goals and values with our constituent-led model.

This move on the part of the Mayor and the head of the Human Services Department is clearly political punishment and payback for speaking Truth to Power, and sticking up for our values, shelters, organizations, and selves—poor people banded together for mutual survival and strength.

Over the past year, we've spoken Truth to Power by:

- Asking—along with **MANY** others, including 130 HSD staffpeople, the Seattle Human Services Coalition, the Seattle Indian Center, the Our City Coalition, and the Transit Rider's Union—for an open, transparent, collaborative process to determine the Head of the Human Service Department, instead of slam-dunking the appointment of a person whose body of work—including this decision—shows deep disregard for marginalized communities and people.
- Speaking out about the Human Services Department's lack of adherence to the Seattle Encampment Ordinance and lack of support for its Encampment Operators like SHARE/WHEEL and Nickelsville. HSD's dismissal of SHARE/WHEEL's organizing work, and refusal to treat us as operating partners, unraveled and devolved two of our hard-won and well-run communities—Tent City5 Interbay and Licton Springs Village. Their ill-treatment and disregard for the Encampment Ordinance and Encampment Operators are now also risking Nickelsville's good work with four more Tiny House communities.

- Speaking out against the City's marriage to flawed, fantasist, failed, and damaging Pathways Home policies, including the de-funding of the SHARE/WHEEL shelter network and the WHEEL low-barrier women's shelter not once, but TWICE in the past year. We also spoke out and advocated for restored funding for MANY other agencies and programs, including the Women's Referral Center, the Women's Wellness Center, Angeline's Women's Shelter, the Urban Rest Stops and other hygiene centers. All of those other programs were automatically folded over into 2019 City/HSD base funding AND were offered Cost Of Living Adjustments (a COLA), but SHARE and WHEEL were not. Why is that?
- Speaking out against sweeps, sticking up for vehicle sleepers, and contradicting the fast-and-loose playing around with statistics the Mayor and the HSD Director do to justify their damaging and wrong-headed decisions. In last week's State of the City Address, to aid continued reliance on the failed and harmful Pathways Home initiative, the Mayor and HSD Director ballyhooed housing outcomes statistics, but they are double-, triple-, quadruple-counting housing exits, when they CANNOT give an unduplicated number of exits. (For background, see: <https://thecisforcrank.com/2019/02/22/fact-checking-the-homelessness-claims-in-the-mayors-state-of-the-city-speech/>)

Unlike at the Mexican border, there IS a State of Emergency here in Seattle/King County—it's a Homeless State of Emergency, jointly declared by Mayor Murray and King County Executive Constantine more than three years ago. In the third year of that Emergency, last year, at least 120 homeless people died outside of shelter or by violence in King County (of at least 193 homeless deaths altogether—women, men and children). This broke all previous records, and is an incontrovertible sign of the Emergency. More people are living—and dying—on our streets than ever before.

Seattle and King County are creating more basic shelter--and tearing down walls both actual and metaphoric--because of this Emergency.

How, then, does it make sense to threaten to de-fund and shutter SHARE and WHEEL's shelters, totaling well over 200 spots, AGAIN, for the third time in just over a year?

How, then, does it make sense again to threaten the future of our cost-effective, well-self-managed, church-based shelter network, and the critically-needed, life-saving WHEEL low-barrier women's shelter? (Which low-barrier women's shelter, by the way, served 72 women this past weekend in our 40 spots due to need and our no-turnaway policy.)

On the Seattle border between justice and injustice, the City's punitive power play will terrify and anger homeless participants, destabilize our operations, and make much more difficult our work of keeping people alive with dignity.

Mayoral/Human Services Department mistreatment of SHARE and WHEEL—and disregard for the City Council's authority—is shameful and wrong. These kinds of actions are not OUR Seattle, and do not reflect Seattle values.

DON'T LET THEM BUILD A WALL TO PUSH SHARE AND WHEEL OUT OF OUR CITY.

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Please reach out to us to get more information!

WHEEL and SHARE

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