



City of Seattle
Seattle Renters' Commission

ChrisTiana ObeySumner & Jessica Westgren, Co-Chairs

April 1, 2019

RE: Passing Rent Control to Seattle

Seattle City Council & Office of the Mayor,

The Seattle Renters' Commission urges the City Council take action in line with their 2015 resolution supporting a repeal of the Statewide rent control ban by passing an ordinance, within the next three months, to implement rent control in Seattle, effective whenever that state ban is lifted. We also urge the Mayor to affirm support for rent control by backing this ordinance. Passage of this ordinance will sharply pose to State Legislators the impact of that ban and will help renter rights advocates advocate for its repeal.

The unpredictability and rate of rent increases in the past decade has caused a massive burden on renters which has led to both homelessness and displacement of Seattleites. Meanwhile, Washington is the only remaining state or province on the west coast to have no form of rent control. With the passage of a rent control law, the City Council and Mayor can provide meaningful support to struggling communities in Seattle and Washington State.

According to the 2018 Point in Time count, 81 percent of homeless neighbors were previously housed in King County. Currently, forty-six percent of Seattle renters are rent burdened and a worker earning minimum wage at \$15 per hour at 40 hours per week will spend 73 percent of their earnings on an average Seattle rent of \$1,770 per month. Meanwhile, rents have soared over the last decade. Between 2008 and 2017, rents in Seattle rose 62 percent on average, according to former Seattle rent tracking agency Dupre + Scott.

The Seattle Renters' Commission supports rent control because it gives renters stability and predictability. Rather than worrying if the next rent increase will be the one to force us from our homes, a stabilized increase, which works on a schedule, would allow renters to adequately plan for the future.

Additionally, and most importantly, rent control keeps rents from skyrocketing if implemented with vacancy control, which applies rent stabilization to vacant units. We know that rent control works. In Montréal, where rent control that includes vacancy control has been law since 1979, rents have stayed consistent and predictable. This has been the case even as Canada's second largest city has continued to grow, adding approximately 100,000 residents in the past decade. Meanwhile, between October 2008 and October 2017, average rent for all combined housing types rose 9 percent from \$634 to just \$735 per month according to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Association.



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Seattle renters are facing a crisis and our City Council and Mayor must act accordingly. If we do nothing, the cost of rent will continue to skyrocket while more and more Seattleites will be forced onto the streets or out of the region entirely. By passing robust rent control legislation now, you will not only help increase pressure on State Legislators to lift the ban, you will also avoid any delay in implementing rent control once the ban is lifted protecting more renters.

We, the Seattle Renters' Commission strongly advise that the City Council take action on this in the next three months to support tenants and to stop displacement. The City Council has the power to help end this crisis. Please bring forth and pass a rent control ordinance, effective immediately after the State ban on rent control is lifted.

Thank you for taking action on this important matter.

The Seattle Renters' Commission

Cc: Andres Mantilla, Director, Seattle Department of Neighborhoods