

CITY OF SEATTLE

RESOLUTION 31955

A RESOLUTION reaffirming The City of Seattle's support of unbanked money transfer operators and the immigrant communities they serve.

WHEREAS, the City Council passed Resolution 31578 to help support money transfer operators (MTOs); and

WHEREAS, though the Office of Immigrant and Refugee Affairs (OIRA), Office of Economic Development (OED), and Finance and Administrative Services (FAS) have made efforts to find a solution for unbanked MTOs, those efforts have not yet yielded a positive result; and

WHEREAS, a recent string of armed robberies on these unbanked MTOs (that store large amounts of cash in their premises) in Seattle and surrounding cities has turned this issue into a public safety concern; and

WHEREAS, East African immigrant communities in Seattle rely on these MTOs to send money to their loved ones abroad. For example, every year Somalia receives approximately \$1.3 billion in remittances and more than 730,000 people in Somalia are dependent on financial assistance for survival. Funding from remittances accounts for basic needs including food, water, shelter and education. One in every five children in Somalia dies before their fifth birthday, and only 30 percent of the population has access to clean drinking water; and

WHEREAS, over the past few years, these MTOs have found it increasingly difficult to operate without a bank account. Many have shut down, and the ones that remain transport millions of dollars in cash through SeaTac Airport each month; and

WHEREAS, these MTOs provide culturally specific services; deliver money to remote regions not served by the large operators, including refugee camps in East Africa; provide good paying jobs; contribute to community activities; and are a valuable members of Seattle's small business community; and

WHEREAS, Seattle has one of the biggest East African communities in the United States – nearly 30,000 Ethiopians, Eritreans, and Somalis are Seattle residents, and thousands more are estimated to live in King County; and

WHEREAS, the vast majority of Seattle's East African residents are refugees and new residents need effective systems that will support them in staying connected to their loved ones back home; and

WHEREAS, East Africans are critical to Seattle's economic vitality because they purchase goods and services and run small businesses, which in turn create jobs and generate revenue for the region; and

WHEREAS, it is in The City of Seattle's interest to promote financial inclusion and public safety; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Legislature and the State of Washington have jurisdiction over State licensed banks; and

WHEREAS, the Washington State Legislature and the State of Washington have the authority to pass laws and develop processes that promote financial inclusion and public safety;

NOW, THEREFORE,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE CITY COUNCIL OF THE CITY OF SEATTLE THAT:

Section 1. The City of Seattle reaffirms its support of the East African community in their desire to support their loved ones in the Horn of Africa. The City of Seattle also reaffirms the

1 right of money transfer operators to engage in lawful commerce in a safe manner. Furthermore,
2 The City of Seattle strongly urges the Washington State Senate Financial Institutions, Economic
3 Development & Trade Committee and the House Consumer Protection and Business Committee
4 to study policy options for and explore legislation about bank de-risking and its impact on public
5 safety and equal access.

6 Section 2. The City Council requests that Office of Intergovernmental Relations staff
7 reach out to the State of Washington and the Washington Legislature to explore actions they can
8 take to promote financial inclusion for Seattle residents and businesses.

1 Adopted by the City Council the 13th day of _____ July _____, 2020,
2 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its adoption this 13th day of
3 _____ July _____, 2020.



4 _____
5 President _____ of the City Council

6 Filed by me this 13th day of _____ July _____, 2020.



7 _____
8 Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

9 (Seal)