

Re: 200+ organizations, unions, & neighbors urge City investment in high-support shelter and throughput to housing

March 25, 2026

Dear Seattle City Councilmembers,

We are a broad coalition who have come together to voice our strong support for robust funding of Seattle's shelter and housing system. **We support a focused investment in high-support shelter programs *while* stabilizing and expanding the critical investment in operating permanent supportive housing.**

People can take a variety of paths to exit homelessness. And, we know that many people living outside in our neighborhoods today have unaddressed behavioral health needs that require more support than what current shelter or housing options are generally able to provide. REACH, the largest street based outreach program working with unsheltered people in Seattle, captured data from encounters with 4,500 unduplicated individuals in 2025. Of this population, they found that **63% of people living outside had some kind of substance use, mental health, or medical need, with many experiencing overlapping needs.**

To effectively serve people with complex needs, we must significantly increase the number of high-support shelter units available to Seattle's unhoused population. High support shelter models require an intentionally built environment, with participant-centered program design, skilled case management, access to recovery resources, and overdose prevention protocols. As this shelter surge moves forward, it will be important to assess whether the level of support provided is adequate to match the behavioral and other health needs of the majority of those unsheltered who need and deserve intensive services.

Ensuring that shelters are able to skillfully serve people with complex needs can set up success in subsequent permanent housing placement. Immediate and acute needs can be addressed in shelter, along with a more accurate assessment of ongoing needs. This benefits not only tenants, but housing providers, whose staff then isn't forced to grapple with more extreme behaviors that can sometimes occur as a result of transitions that do not align effective resources with tenant needs.

Shelters must also be designed with intentional throughput to housing. With reliable throughput, shelter participants can move into permanent housing once their case management plans have identified their ongoing support needs and the right housing match. If shelter users do not have a clear and consistent path to housing, their progress halts, shelters lose capacity to work with new people, and Seattle's continuum of care loses cohesion. **As it stands, we do not have enough high-support shelter space *or* supportive housing — and we need *both*.**

Finally, we believe in **ensuring neighborhoods are supported with dedicated funding for neighborhood impact mitigation efforts when accepting new shelter locations.** Key elements in these efforts should include additional program staffing for these shelters, access to

dedicated safety ambassadors, and de-escalation teams. We applaud that Mayor Katie Wilson has already recognized the importance of this component of the work, and we emphasize the need for dedicated funding to follow.

We've gained so much knowledge in the more than a decade since a Seattle Mayor declared homelessness to be a city emergency. We've tested models, expanded resources, and nurtured trust. **We must pave all the possible paths to housing to ensure no one is left out in the cold.**

Sincerely,

Organizations

Alliance for Pioneer Square
Arms Around You
Ballard Alliance
Ballard Food Bank
Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence
Chief Seattle Club
ChuMinh Tofu and Vegan Deli
Circle the Square
CISC
Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence
Compass Housing Alliance
DESC
Disability Rights Washington
Downtown Community Council (DCC)
Downtown Seattle Association
Eastside Academy
Eggrolls Mutual Aid
Elizabeth Gregory Home
Evergreen Treatment Services
For Seattle Project
Friends of Little Sai Gon
Greater Seattle Business Association (GSBA)
Got Green
HealthPoint Community Health Centers
Hellbent Brewing Company
Highland Park Action Coalition
International Organization of Human Right Protection and Global Peace
Jones Community Solutions LLC
Lake City Community Council
Lavender Rights Project
Low Income Housing Institute (LIHI)
Melbourne Tower
Metropolitan Improvement District
Molly Moon's Homemade Ice Cream
Neighborhood House
North Helpline
Northwest Immigrant Rights Project

Operation Nightwatch
People Power WA
Plymouth Housing
Purpose Dignity Action (PDA)
Queen Anne Helpline
Queer Power Alliance
Rainier Beach Action Coalition
RebIX
ROOTS Young Adult Shelter
Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness
SEIU Healthcare 1199NW
SHARE/WHEEL
Southeast Seattle Education Coalition
Services Not Sweeps Coalition
Turntables & Trails Social Purpose Corp
U District Partnership
UFCW 3000
University Heights Center, Vehicle Resident Outreach
Washington Defender Association
We Deliver Care
West Seattle Junction Association
Westside Interfaith Network
Westside Neighbors Shelter
YouthCare
YWCA | Seattle King Snohomish

Community Members

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