



October 21, 2024

Dear Councilmembers:

The Seattle Renters' Commission (SRC) urges the Seattle City Council to prioritize and increase funding for tenant services in next year's budget. Renters make up nearly half of Seattle's population, and many are facing unprecedented challenges due to the growing housing affordability crisis and economic uncertainty.

Housing is a fundamental human right, and access to secure, stable housing is critical to ensuring the dignity, health, and well-being of individuals, as well as promoting community cohesion. Funding tenant services is an investment in public safety because it helps renters maintain stable housing, which reduces the risk of displacement, homelessness, and the social conditions that contribute to crime and instability.

The proposed budget cut to tenant services will severely limit organizations such as the Tenant Law Center, Tenants Union of Washington State, Solid Ground, United Indians of All Tribes, Villa Comunitaria, and Somali Community Services, to name a few, from being able to provide legal aid, prevent unfair evictions, educate renters on their rights, and equip both renters and landlords with conflict de-escalation skills. As emphasized in a recent [Seattle Times op-ed](#), halving funding will unravel "an essential net that catches thousands of our Seattle neighbors each year before they lose their housing or fall into homelessness." These funds account for a very small fraction of the overall \$8.3 billion city budget, and proactive investment mitigates far higher costs associated with the long term services required to support those facing homelessness.

As articulated in the [open letter from the Stay Housed, Stay Healthy Coalition](#), the SRC respectfully requests that the City Council **increase funding by \$5.3 million for tenant services and rental assistance** in next year's budget and make the protection of housing a top priority in the city's agenda. Nearly half of Seattle-area renters are [rent-burdened](#), and with unpaid rent being the leading cause of eviction cases in the state, these services not only help keep people housed but also alleviate pressure on other critical city services aimed at supporting those experiencing homelessness.

Additionally, the SRC respectfully requests that the City Council **reinstate \$50,000 in funding for a tenant work group** to explore the creation of an Office of Rental Housing Standards. This office would streamline services by consolidating the various departments that support renters into a single, more efficient entity. These funds were unanimously approved in the balancing package last year but were [never released to SDCI](#).

The decisions made in the coming year will determine whether Seattle remains a place where all its residents can thrive, or whether it becomes further divided along economic lines. The Commission appreciates the Council's time and dedication to making Seattle a more just and equitable city for all.

Sincerely,  
Seattle Renters' Commission