



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT

Wednesday, March 11, 2020

To: Mayor Jenny Durkan

CC: Deputy Mayor Casey Sixkiller
Deputy Mayor Michael Fong
Seattle City Councilmembers

Dear Mayor Durkan:

The coronavirus crisis is beginning to ravage our community. You are obliged to act urgently under your emergency powers, which the Seattle City Council granted with a vote last week.

Working people are seeing reduced, and even entirely eliminated, paychecks, and they [will find it difficult if not impossible to pay the rent](#) or mortgage beginning next month. We need the City to act urgently to prevent what could potentially be thousands of working families facing eviction, bankruptcy, or both.

Just last night, the [San Jose City Council adopted a 30-day moratorium on evictions](#) as a result of substantial loss of income to renters due to the Coronavirus situation. San Francisco Supervisor Dean Preston has introduced similar legislation for an upcoming vote. Here in Seattle, you as Mayor could take immediate action under your emergency powers, enacting a moratorium on evictions and foreclosures.

A study last year found that [60 percent of Americans are unable to cover an unexpected \\$1,000 expense](#), and indeed even under normal circumstances, most people would be in a bind if they missed even one paycheck. The status quo under capitalism is deeply hostile to the majority of working people, and it would be unconscionable to place the further burden of the Coronavirus crisis on those who are already the most economically stressed.

In Seattle right now, tens of thousands of workers – gig economy workers, service economy workers, small business workers, workers in entertainment industries, retail workers, office workers, and others – are waking up worried about basic survival. Without the City's immediate intervention, renters will be evicted and small business owners will go bankrupt. The human cost will be incalculable.

I call on you, under the emergency powers that the Council has given you, to immediately take the following steps:

1) Ban all economic evictions and late fees – both residential and small business.

- 2) **Ban all coronavirus-related home foreclosures.**
- 3) **Require landlords, utilities, and residential mortgage-holders to work out payment plans** that allow tenants and homeowners who are suffering economically due to the coronavirus epidemic up to 24 months to fulfill their payment obligations.
- 4) **Require all residential landlords to extend expiring leases** until at least three months after the end date of the emergency declaration.
- 5) **Expand shelter for the thousands of people living on the street**, by re-signing the Northlake Tiny House Village lease, and also by funding the immediate siting and construction of at least 8 new tiny house villages.

By sending this letter, I am joining a [community of working people and advocates who have written an open letter](#) days ago, urging you, King County Executive Constantine, and Washington Governor Inslee to take action on many of these steps.

I urge you to take these steps immediately, to provide the basic economic security that working people need and deserve during this historic crisis.

Sincerely,



Kshama Sawant