



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

## COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT

January 7, 2022

Dear Mayor Bruce Harrell,

I am writing to urge you to extend Seattle's eviction moratorium for residents, small businesses, and nonprofits beyond its current expiration date of January 15, through to the end of the public health emergency.

As yesterday's letter from the Stay Housed Stay Healthy Coalition, cosigned by 40 organizations including my organization, Socialist Alternative, explained, "The Omicron surge has filled hospitals to capacity, straining Seattle's health care system. It is disrupting schools and workplaces, causing stress and confusion. Federal child tax credit payments just ended, adding to the financial burden for many households. Evictions often lead to homelessness, especially with occupancy rates at historic highs, and Seattle's homelessness response system is already overwhelmed."

Even before the COVID emergency, conditions for renters in Seattle had already become intolerable. Skyrocketing rents driven by the predatory real estate speculation market, forced many working-class renters out of their homes and sometimes out of the city, or even into homelessness. The economic devastation triggered by the COVID emergency massively exacerbated that crisis. Throughout the past year, an estimated 175,000 Washington residents fell behind on their rent. Ending the moratorium now would send thousands to eviction court — disproportionately renters of color — and according to the Losing Home Report, almost 90% of them will become homeless.

Over the past year, my office has fought alongside renters' rights activists, and we've won a series of victories. We won the winter eviction moratorium, the schoolchildren eviction ban, and several extensions of the COVID emergency eviction moratorium, in addition to closing loopholes in the just cause eviction ordinance, relocation assistance for economically evicted renters, and six months' notice for rent increases. All of these victories are a clear indication that renters face unacceptable conditions and are prepared to fight. That is also why we are building the movement for rent control.



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 3

## COUNCILMEMBER KSHAMA SAWANT

Ending the COVID emergency moratorium now would dramatically worsen the lives of our city's renters. As yesterday's letter from the Stay Housed Stay Healthy Coalition explained, "Renters have scrambled to become current — whether by seeking support from friends and loved ones, or using credit cards to pay, or turning to several organizations each month to cobble together their total payment due. King County implemented an emergency prevention rental assistance program (EPRAP), but recently it was closed without warning, making it hard for tenants to keep track of the EPRAP program and their ability to achieve housing stability. It's essential we keep renters housed so they can access this assistance as it becomes available."

I urge you to do the right thing and extend the eviction moratorium through to the end of the COVID public health emergency. As long as there is an emergency, renters must be part of the emergency protections.

Thank you,

Councilmember Kshama Sawant, District 3