Dear Mr. Mayor and Seattle City Councilmembers,

SHSC is a group of over 265 human service coalitions, agencies, and programs, as well as concerned individuals committed to helping Seattle-King County residents reach their full potential. We work in areas including homelessness, hunger, domestic violence, early childhood education, aging, disabilities, sexual assault, health care, employment, racial equity, and child/youth development.

The City of Seattle’s policies on homelessness affect our ability to provide services to Seattle communities in all these areas. When City policies make it more difficult for people without homes to get back on their feet, the demands on our human services system increase, making it more difficult for everyone to access these urgently needed resources and ultimately weakening our community.

Seven months ago Mayor Murray declared the State of Emergency regarding homelessness in Seattle/King County. In the past seven months the Mayor and Seattle City Councilmembers, as well as many in the provider community, have worked together to contribute additional resources and implement additional services designed to address the needs of people living in Seattle without homes. It is clear that the needs far outweigh the initial local response, and that it will take time to meet that need, including ongoing advocacy for more state and federal support. Good steps have been taken, and many more still need to be taken.

Because we know that together we do not yet have the capacity to address the needs that all Seattle residents without homes are experiencing, the Seattle Human Services Coalition urges an approach of compassion and dignity to those who remain unsheltered on our streets.

We support the spirit of All Home’s Strategic Plan, which calls on cities to "foster collaboration between first responders, service providers, and local communities to increase housing stability for people experiencing homelessness." This approach is exemplified by providing outreach and clean-ups that offer services and housing while also protecting property owned by, and the safety of, those living in encampments and cars.

With the numbers of people living in our city without homes continuing to increase, the City of Seattle has conducted an increasing number of “sweeps” of unauthorized encampments of people without
homes. Blocking life-sustaining behaviors, like sleeping in green spaces or under bridges when we do not have enough affordable housing, or even temporary 24-hr a day options, is unreasonable and ultimately counter-productive to the goal of ending homelessness.

Without sufficient notice, effective outreach, and offers of meaningful alternative places to sleep (that do not displace others), people who don’t have homes will likely return to public areas to seek temporary shelter, making removal policies not only unjust, but also ineffective. SHSC urges the City of Seattle to stop “clean-ups” of targeted areas that sweep away people without homes until we as a community can provide housing, or at least, minimally, a twenty-four hour a day housing option that is accessible to individuals based on individuals’ limitations and personal history, can accommodate the resident during the daytime, will allow residents to store their belongings, allow couples and families to remain together, and allow people to keep their pets.

SHSC and our members will continue to act in support of the state of emergency through advocacy, community engagement, and provision of urgently needed services to help Seattle residents rebuild their lives.

Now is the time for everyone to come together, and take the steps needed to ensure that all people living in Seattle have a home.

We thank you for your work on this and other efforts to help every Seattleite reach their full potential.

Sincerely,

Patricia Haydon, SHSC Co-chair
Senior Director, Seattle * King * Snohomish YWCA

Steve Daschle, SHSC Co-chair
Executive Director, Southwest Youth & Family Services

Member Coalitions

* Advocacy, Organizing & Capacity Building Coalition * Coalition Ending Gender-Based Violence *
  * Community Health Council of Seattle King County * Disability Services Committee *
  * King County Early Learning Coalition * Meals Partnership Coalition *
  * Non-Profit Anti-Racism Coalition* Seattle Food Committee *
  * Seattle Helpline Coalition * Seattle King County Coalition on Homelessness *
  * Services for Seniors * Youth Development Executives of King County *

206.325.7105 | shsc@shscoalition.org | www.shscoalition.org

4759 15th Av NE #308
Seattle, WA 98105

Together We’re Better!

Seattle Human Services Coalition: 1987-2016