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Stay Housed Stay Healthy Coalition advances renter protections across King County as June 30 eviction moratorium end date approaches

[Stay Housed Stay Healthy](#), a King County-wide coalition comprising 60 organizations, is fighting to prevent a wave of evictions and homelessness after the scheduled end of Washington state's eviction moratorium on June 30.

The coalition celebrated tangible progress this Monday, when the Seattle City Council passed several important laws to better protect renters: closing the "lease loophole" in Seattle's Just Cause Eviction Ordinance, creating a legal defense to eviction for renters with debt accrued during the pandemic, and banning evictions of families and educators during the school year.

But Stay Housed Stay Healthy's work extends far beyond Seattle. Wednesday morning, the King County Council's CHHS committee discussed [a package of permanent renter protections](#) co-sponsored by Councilmembers Jeanne Kohl-Welles, Girmay Zahilay and Dave Upthegrove. These protections would apply to unincorporated King County, including Skyway.

"Many of the students, families and staff members of Rainier Beach High School live in Skyway, as gentrification continues to push the Rainier Beach community further south," says Chelsea Gallegos, a social worker at RBHS. "Since the pandemic began I have spoken with distraught students who have had to make the hard choice to work full time in order to help their parents with rent and bills. Skyway deserves ongoing eviction protection and a clear pathway out of the looming housing crisis."

The proposed protections include a strong Just Cause law, caps on move-in fees and late-fees and a requirement of 3-4 months notice for significant rent increases. The King County Council may take final action on this legislation as soon as next Tuesday, June 15.

Stay Housed Stay Healthy is also working in cities around the county, urging elected officials to enact local eviction moratoriums that go beyond June 30 and other emergency protections that will push landlords to work with their renters to access rental assistance programs and maintain a tenancy instead of evicting. The Kenmore City Council plans to vote on such legislation next Monday, June 14.

“Now is the time to build a policy bridge to align with what will otherwise be a delayed access to tenant assistance programs,” says Kenmore Councilmember Corina Pfeil. “We’re helping our residents to stay safe and stay healthy while also meeting the most basic of human needs.”

“I am very encouraged to see the City of Kenmore taking the lead among cities in North King County to adopt eviction prevention measures that will provide critically necessary housing stability for renters,” says Rob Beem, Housing Committee Chair of the North Urban Human Service Alliance. “Stable housing remains a key strategy to keep families safe, healthy and connected to their community. These protections allow renters and landlords the necessary time to make wise use of rental assistance resources that are now available.”

“Cities across King County are facing the terrifying prospect of mass evictions starting next month,” says Kenmore Deputy Mayor Nigel Herbig. “I call on my colleagues across the county to join Kenmore in passing needed tenant protections to give renters a safe off-ramp from the end of the eviction moratorium.”

The City of Kirkland, too, is in the forefront of the eviction prevention movement. The Kirkland City Council plans to vote on emergency renter protection legislation next Tuesday, June 15. Councilmembers are proposing to extend a local eviction moratorium through the end of this year, among other measures.

The Stay Housed Stay Healthy coalition is also in conversations with elected officials in Burien, Kent, Tukwila, Lake Forest Park, Redmond, Bellevue and Issaquah.

“Housing is a racial justice issue,” says Tram Tran-Larson, Community Engagement Manager at the Housing Justice Project of the King County Bar Association. “82% of landlords in Seattle are white while 58% of Black households are rent burdened. It is a gender justice issue; women with children are at the greatest risk of eviction. It is a LGBTQ+ justice issue; 1 in 4 trans folks experience housing discrimination. This isn’t about property rights; this is about human rights. Renter protections don’t prevent landlords from providing housing; it prevents renters from being homeless.”

“Eastside Legal Assistance Program joined the Stay Housed, Stay Healthy Coalition because we believe preventing eviction is critical to helping people avoid becoming homeless,” says Chris Lovings, Community Engagement Manager at ELAP. “As one of the biggest civil legal aid organizations in the county, our staff and volunteer attorneys work with people facing eviction or at risk of losing their housing. We have seen first-hand how the pandemic has affected community members across King County--and disproportionately people in the BIPOC community. We stand in solidarity with this coalition, which is pushing for renter protections and greater stability for people in our county.”

"At SHARE we see people coming in from all of King County looking for shelter and combined with the fact we are operating at around 95% capacity, we know without protections for tenants there is going to be nowhere for a tsunami of people and families to go. Every city in King County needs to step up and soon at that!" says Dan McGraw of the Seattle Housing and Resource Effort (SHARE).

"It is glaringly obvious who is impacted most by this crisis," said Seattle City Councilmember Tammy Morales. "Two-thirds of people facing pandemic-related debt are People of Color, low income, and have accrued debt after losing their jobs. The impending torrent of evictions has as much to do with equity and a system built on racism and classism, as it does about this public health crisis."

"Monday's victories are a direct result of renters and community members making bold demands, backing them up with action, and refusing to cut backroom compromises," says Seattle City Councilmember Kshama Sawant. "In the fight to put people before profits, it's vital our movement recognizes that we won through struggle. I am proud to be working alongside labor and community organizations, rank-and-file renters, and socialists to set a fighting example in Seattle that can inspire renters everywhere."

"Coming out of the worst of the COVID crisis, corporate landlords are expecting a ruthless return to business as usual of sky-high profits and rampant gentrification," says Emily MacArthur of Socialist Alternative Seattle. "Meanwhile, renters and working people, especially communities of color, face unprecedented debt. The fighting renters' movement is determined to make sure the new normal is housing as a human right."

Matthew Lang, a Seattle educator, says of the landmark legislation protecting families and education workers, "This is a huge step forward for everyone in the education orbit." In 2019 nearly 10% of all Seattle Public School's student body was experiencing homelessness at some level. "There is a whole downstream effect you have to consider when you remove a stresser like eviction from the table. Parents can focus on parenting, children can focus on learning and their schoolwork, educators can focus on making sure that children are receiving top of the line instruction, and support staff can focus on making sure the institutions we trust our children with daily are running smoothly. A lot changes when you know you're going to have a roof over your head tomorrow, and that's protected by law. Most importantly, these children are our future, and making sure they remain housed is number one priority to ensuring that they do not fall through the cracks of society."