

RESOLUTION to support Stopping “Sweeps” of Homeless Encampments and Funding Affordable Housing and Social Services in the 2018 Budget of the City of Seattle

WHEREAS, the 2017 “Count Us In” study found 3,857 unsheltered and 4,665 sheltered homeless people living in Seattle, a significant increase from findings of the 2016 One Night Count of Seattle’s homeless population; and

WHEREAS, communities of color are disproportionately impacted by the homelessness crisis, with the “Count Us In” study finding 29% of the homeless population identifying as African American compared with 6% of Seattle’s general population, 14% identifying as Latino or Hispanic compared with 9% of Seattle’s general population, 6% identifying American Indian or Alaska Native compared with 1% of Seattle’s general population; and

WHEREAS, the scale of the homelessness crisis compelled the City of Seattle to declare a State of Civil Emergency on Homelessness in November of 2015, and this State of Emergency has continued over the intervening two years as the crisis continues to worsen; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle carried out 601 “sweeps” of homeless encampments in 2016 alone, depriving Seattle’s most vulnerable people of their possessions and shelters, costing the City millions, while not helping alleviate the crisis; and

WHEREAS, instead of sweeps, the City of Seattle should fund services that are humane towards homeless community members, and that improve community health and safety conditions, such as more temporary shelters, authorized encampments, garbage removal and cleanup services, portable toilets, access to shower and laundry, caseworker access, and mental health services; and

WHEREAS the City of Seattle should prioritize the need for shelter, services, and housing experienced by homeless youth and survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse and violence;

WHEREAS, rents in Seattle have skyrocketed out of control over the past several years, with Rentjungle.com reporting that average rent for a 1BR apartment in Seattle in August 2017 was \$2,066/month, up from \$1351/month in 2011, an increase of \$715/month over the last six years; and

WHEREAS, a prominent study in the Journal of Urban Affairs found a direct correlation between rising rents and the increase in homelessness, noting that every \$100 increase in median rent resulted in a 15% increase in homelessness in metro areas; and

WHEREAS, the private housing market cannot be relied upon to provide affordable housing to ordinary working people, with the Seattle Times reporting that “92% of the 31,000 new market-rate apartments that have opened in Seattle this decade have been luxury units”; and

WHEREAS, the City of Seattle has the opportunity to fundamentally alter its approach towards the homeless population, the affordable housing crisis, and inadequate funding for basic services in its 2018 budget; and

THERE FOR BE IT RESOLVED, that the 36th District Democrats supports the Affordable Housing Alliance's 2018 Seattle City budget demands¹ to Stop the "Sweeps" of Homeless Encampments, and to Fund Affordable Housing and Social Services.

¹ The AHA demands are: 1. Stop the sweeps of homeless community members; 2. Fund social services for everyone's safety and health, as an alternative to sweeps; 3. Fund services for homeless children in Seattle public schools and survivors of domestic violence and sexual abuse; 4. Urgently build more affordable housing. Read the full AHA budget sign-on letter here: <https://goo.gl/FCazSG>