



City of Seattle

August 31, 2016

Seattle City Council
600 4th Ave, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Councilmembers,

We appreciate your continued active engagement on the many complex issues related to homelessness in our community. As you know, from day one, this administration has worked to address income inequality and issues of affordability for people living and working in our city. At the same time, we have carefully reviewed and expanded our existing investments to meet the basic and fundamental needs of people experiencing homelessness while providing critical supports and services to them in order to secure stable housing. We have consulted national experts, declared a State of Emergency, added millions in additional funding and are advancing innovative strategies and solutions such as the low-barrier Navigation Center modeled after a San Francisco pilot project. We are looking forward to continuing to advance these efforts with you through policy development and government operations, but also as part of the 2017-18 biennium budget the Mayor will propose for your consideration in late September.

While we focus on the root causes of homelessness and modify and develop new strategies, the City has a fundamental obligation to appropriately and responsibly address any public health or safety challenges that emerge from the existence of homeless encampments in virtually all of our neighborhoods and business districts. You have recently been presented a draft bill from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) and Columbia Legal Services (CLS), among other advocates, that would dramatically impact the City of Seattle's ability to execute necessary and critical health and safety operations. In order to fully assess the policy, operational and fiscal impacts of the draft bill, we have asked impacted City Department Directors, including the City Budget Office, to provide an analysis of the proposal. Attached, you will find a memo to you and the Mayor's Office from Police Chief (SPD) Kathleen O'Toole, Human Services Director (HSD) Catherine Lester, Department of Transportation Director (SDOT) Scott Kubly, City Budget Director (CBO) Ben Noble, Parks and Recreation Superintendent (DPR) Jesus Aguirre, Office of Intergovernmental Relations Director (OIR) Chris Gregorich and Finance and Administrative Services Director (FAS) Fred Podesta. Their perspective is absolutely critical as you consider advancing this legislation.

This evening, the Mayor and Councilmember Sally Bagshaw's Unsanctioned Encampments Cleanup Protocols Task Force will begin discussing potential recommendations to improve upon our current practices by providing better clarity, coordination and outreach, as well as how to address critical public health and safety issues and the storage of belongings for encampment residents. I hope Council will give this group the opportunity to formulate carefully considered and well-informed actions.

Sincerely,

Michael Fong
Chief of Staff
Mayor Edward B. Murray