

Press Conference on Employee Hours Tax

May 2, 2018

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The Church Council of Greater Seattle, along with faith allies such as Catholic Community Services, strongly support the Employee Hours Tax as an effective and fair way to provide services to people experiencing homelessness and to create a means to build low-income housing proportionate to the need. Homelessness and lack of housing go together. The faith community for decades has been on the front lines of tackling this twin challenge. We as a community have risen up to provide shelter and permanent housing. But despite great efforts and accomplishments, our current resources fall short in meeting the challenge.

We cry out at the suffering we see in this emergency, as unhoused people die on the streets in record numbers. We believe that a commonwealth where all of our city's residents thrive is possible. A progressive source of revenue is right-sized to meet the crisis that our city faces.

We have reached out to council members and the mayor to speak to the truth that respecting the dignity and dreams of people who are homeless – working and surviving neighbors of ours – is the measure of the moral compass of our community.

Now is the time to act to proactively address this intolerable scandal. This tax is a down payment on the 20,000 affordable units that are necessary to meet the current shortage. The time is always right to do what is right.

The fullest response to homelessness is prevention, a guarantee of a permanent roof over everyone's head, and the political will to invest in all of our city's residents. All three are found in this creative and vital measure.

As women gather across the street to stand in vigil for another human being who has died while homeless in King County, the 34th person already during this year after a record 90 last year, let us remember and pray for those who have died on the streets; and, fight for the living because they are worthy as people and as deserving of a place called home, both in our eyes and in God's eyes.

Let us act on what is just and right – right away!