

**From:** [Lauren Fay](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Committee Assistants \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment  
**Date:** Tuesday, October 6, 2020 11:25:14 AM

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Submitting on behalf of my colleague, David Helde in support of "Health through Housing".

To the King County Council,

My name is David Helde. I am a Shelter Case Manager at DESC and a union delegate for SEIU 1199NW. I certainly do not speak for either of those organizations in any official manner, but my experiences with both of them obviously informs my testimony today.

One of the mottoes at SEIU is that we are "Stronger Together." In fact, I would say that this principle is specifically what societies themselves are based on. Individual people banding together to bring their individual strengths into a group for their mutual and universal benefit is what civilization IS. Sometimes those skills and gifts are easy to see, and sometimes they aren't. But I would say that they always exist. Everybody has something to donate, something to teach, something of value. Everybody IS something of value. And our society has strayed from this basic concept, this basic fact. We have people today that we treat as throwaway people. We have people today that we treat as dispensable. If you doubt this, merely look at the list of unsheltered people that die outdoors kept by the Women in Black. If you doubt this, simply speak to anybody that works at DESC. Speak to one of the High Utilizer Case Managers at Harborview Medical Center or to a REACH employee or to countless other people that spend their days or nights trying to somehow make their time and compassion be enough to meet people's basic needs.

Our unsheltered neighbors deserve better than this, but the rest of society deserves better than this as well. We are currently missing out on the gifts that they have to give. They are missing out on the opportunity to meaningfully participate in society in the ways that you and I take for granted. Providing housing is the first step towards stability. And stability is the first step towards building a society that is truly inclusive. We have built a society where people cannot access housing (and I can tell you firsthand that there are far too many people that simply can NOT access housing due to the absolute dearth of low income and subsidized housing). As long as that is the case, we are allowing a caste system of "haves" and "have nots" to exist. It is systemic. And we are turning a blind eye to it because we are too lazy and uncaring to change it. This is one of those situations that can be accurately described as "It is not a bug. This is how the system was *designed*." Until we change that fundamental design of the system by creating widespread affordable housing, you, myself, and all of us, are at fault for allowing this to continue.

Thank you for your time.

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**David Helde**

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