

The Eviction Prevention Fund

An eviction report late last year commissioned by the City of Seattle called *Losing Home: The Human Cost of Eviction in Seattle* found that

The most common reason a tenant faced eviction was for nonpayment of rent. We reviewed the complaints, and, when attached, the three-day notices to pay or vacate, in order to determine the amount owed by each tenant. Of all nonpayment of rent cases, 52.3% owed one month or less before an eviction was led. More than three-quarters (76.6%) of nonpayment of rent cases were initiated for less than \$2,500.00. Of these 807 cases in which less than \$2,500.00 was allegedly outstanding, **a total of \$997,968.22** in rent arrears was owed based on the rent demands. Among this group, the median rent owed was \$1,236.64(emphasis added).

There are issues with data in this report, we propose but establishment of a program funded by the Housing Trust Fund that would address this issue directly with cash support to households who face eviction over amounts of money ranging from \$100 to one months rent. We propose that the capital budget set aside \$2,000,000 to pilot this program.

This investment in prevention would prevent:

- Households from being evicted;
- Homelessness;
- Increased costs from homelessness (i.e. shelter beds, law enforcement);
- Damage to credit ratings;
- Damage to tenancy history;
- Court costs to tenants and landlords; and
- The need for more expensive, new subsidized units

This program would start as a pilot in King County that would grant funds totaling \$1,000,000 to tenants and landlords directly through referral by non-profit organizations working with tenants to avoid eviction or landlords working with their own tenants having issues with paying rent. They payment would be direct cash payment to cover rent. In exchange the landlord would not initiate an eviction action.

Other counties in the state could access the other \$1,000,000 in funds through an application to the Commerce Department.

The Joint Legislative Audit and Review Committee (JLARC) would conduct a real time evaluation month to month, to determine

- Did the program prevent eviction;
- Were tenants able to address other on going issues;
- A measure of payment at three and six months for each household;
- A final report on the disposition of each case;
- A statistical analysis of the overall impact on eviction and broader benefits of the program, including impact on existing housing resources.