

July 20, 2018

Dear One Table Co-Chairs:

Homelessness is a crisis affecting cities across our nation, and our region. It affects the cities where we live and serve, and we see the impacts on a daily basis. We are committed to working together as a region to address this crisis.

While this regional crisis will require regional solutions, we also want to stress that one size does not fit all. Our cities have different needs than Seattle, and indeed there are differences between all our cities. The challenges faced by cities on the eastside are different in many ways from those faced in South King County. Solutions, or approaches to solutions, may differ by city or regions of the county. We are made up of large and small cities, rural and urban cities and that makes a one size solution difficult to implement.

We appreciate One Table's focus on addressing root causes of homelessness. We agree that affordable housing, behavioral health treatment, services for youth aging out of foster care, criminal justice reform, and increased access to employment all have important parts to play in addressing the crisis.

To us, two areas stand out where all of us can make a difference in reducing homelessness. These include modifications and even reform of the behavioral health system, and the need to make existing funds for affordable housing more flexible to promote housing stability.

Behavioral Health: We believe that focusing on providing treatment on demand for those in need of behavioral health treatment has the most promise to address the needs in our communities today. Additionally, every one of us can point to individuals in our communities who refuse treatment. We should explore how these individuals could be helped by new legislation allowing for involuntary treatment for those presenting an imminent likelihood of serious harm to self or others, or who are gravely disabled as a result of substance use disorder.

Flexible Funding: There is great promise in making existing funding more flexible in order to promote housing stability. We should target resources where they are needed to help empower individuals experiencing homelessness to get back on their feet as quickly as possible so that homelessness is rare and, when experienced, brief and one-time.

As elected leaders, we must recognize there is currently a lack of public trust in how homelessness is being addressed in this region. In order to rebuild that trust, we need to take a hard look at the systems in our cities, and in the region, and ensure that we are delivering services as effectively and efficiently as possible. We need to focus on our own accountability and responsibilities as public servants, and we need to hold the providers we contract with accountable for effective and efficient delivery of services. We also need a focus on individual responsibility and accountability if we are to truly address this crisis in the long run.

As local elected officials, we have a responsibility to serve those in crisis, and we have a moral responsibility to help those in need. That requires us to take action even when there is vocal opposition within our communities. At the same time, as city officials we also have an obligation to keep our public places clean and safe for all our residents, and a responsibility to spend public resources wisely.

We have much more work to do in order to address this crisis, and to rebuild the trust with our communities. Until we have done the hard work to reform our systems, to better align our funding across the region, and to make our governance more transparent and accountable, we are not supportive of going to the public with a request for new funding. We owe it to the public that we serve to demonstrate that we are spending our existing dollars well before we ask them to support any new tax measures.

Finally, we recognize that the public sector does not have all the answers to this regional crisis. We need to tackle this challenge with our partners in business and philanthropy. We look forward to strengthening that partnership in the coming months, and to building on the work begun through this regional initiative.

Sincerely,



Mayor Nancy Backus, Auburn
One Table Co-Chair
All Home Coordinating Board Member



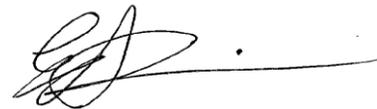
Mayor John Chelminiak, Bellevue
One Table Member
All Home Coordinating Board Member



Mayor Dana Ralph, Kent
One Table Member



Mayor Amy Walen, Kirkland
One Table Member



Council President Ed Prince, Renton
One Table Member