



CITY OF SEATTLE

February 10, 2020

Jason Johnson
Interim Director
Human Services Department
700 5th Ave
Seattle, WA 98104

Interim Director Johnson,

As you are aware, senior citizens who rely on federal disability benefits for their income, specifically Supplemental Security Income and Social Security Disability Income, have unique barriers to housing because the assistance provided by these programs has not kept pace with the increased costs of housing in our area. As a result, individuals enrolling in or transitioning to these federal programs often become housing unstable or homeless once approved for benefits, and many of these individuals who experience homelessness have longer shelter stays, even compared to individuals whose vulnerability is more severe. It was for that reason that the Council passed budget actions HOM-13-B-1, SDOT-912-A-1, and LAW-900-A-1, which provide \$750,000 for a rental assistance program and its evaluation.

Thank you for your efforts to collaborate with the City Council and key stakeholders in designing this program and for convening a stakeholder group in January 2020 to obtain community input. Multiple stakeholders and our staff have reported how helpful that conversation was in advancing the development of this pilot. This type of open and collaborative work helps to ensure that the City funds effective interventions that best respond to the crisis of homelessness in our area.

As a result of conversations during the stakeholder meeting that took place on January 30, 2020, it has come to our attention that further clarification of the Council's intent when providing these funds would assist HSD in designing the pilot.

Because housing options for these individuals receiving federal disability benefits are so limited, it is unlikely that individuals who transition from the Housing and Essential Needs program to federal disability programs or who are currently homeless despite their federal benefit will be able to locate long-term housing options in only a few months. Service providers in our community have indicated that some of these individuals may require as many as three years to locate their long-term housing options, such as project-based senior housing and affordable housing options. It is for that reason that the initial appropriation envisions up to twelve months of assistance for individuals served by this pilot program.

The Council recognizes that designing a pilot program that is informed by the best evidence and knowledge on the needs of these individuals and then going through a competitive process to award those funds requires multiple months of work. The Council intended for the resulting



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program to span multiple years because of those necessary delays and does not envision these funds being fully expended by the contracted agency prior to December 31, 2020. In addition, the Council is aware that a program of this type may be most effective if support is provided for a maximum of three years, rather than the twelve months of assistance outlined in this appropriation. The Council may consider the merits of such a proposal this fall when developing the next biennial budget. The design of this pilot and lessons learned from its initial implementation would help to inform such a proposal.

Thank you again for your collaboration on this work and for seeking to develop and launch this pilot as rapidly as possible.

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