



December 9, 2015

The Honorable Mark Schoesler
Senate Majority Leader
PO Box 40409
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Steve O'Ban, Chair
Human Service, Mental Health and Housing Committee
P.O. Box 40428
Olympia, WA 98504

RE: Support for Local Option to Preserve Affordable Housing and Build Quality Equitable Communities

Dear Senator Schoesler and Senator O'Ban:

We, the undersigned municipal leaders, are expressing our support for additional tools to address housing preservation and affordability at the local level. We ask that you consider including as a part of your caucus priorities for the 2016 legislative session proposed legislation that would authorize a local option tax exemption to preserve affordability in our communities.

A Preservation Tax Exemption would both serve to improve private market housing of substandard health and quality, and create affordable housing opportunities in higher cost markets. In many communities across the state older buildings do provide affordable housing options for low-income people, but the properties are often in poor condition. A preservation tax exemption would provide property owners with the necessary resources to rehabilitate these properties to high health and quality standards, and alleviate the need to raise rents to provide funding for building repairs,

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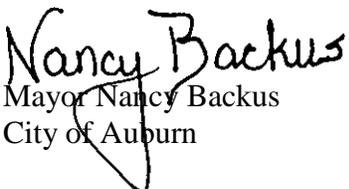
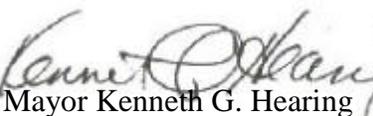
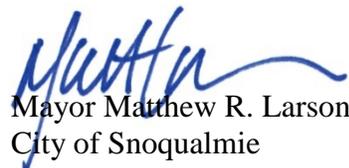
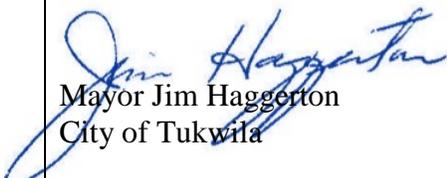
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thereby preventing displacement. Property owners in high rent areas with newer buildings could use the exemption to keep rents affordable.

Affordable housing is a smart investment that creates inclusive, thriving communities where people of all incomes can live. We know that there were over 32,500 homeless children in Washington schools during the 2013-14 school year and that over 390,000, or 15 percent, of state residents are severely cost burdened and pay more than half of their income for housing.

Thank you for considering this important proposal for a flexible tool to provide communities with a local option to address housing preservation and affordability. We look forward to working with you during the 2016 legislative session.

Best regards,

 Mayor Nancy Backus City of Auburn	 Mayor Dave Earling City of Edmonds	 Mayor Amy Walen City of Kirkland
 Mayor Mary Jane Goss City of Lake Forest Park	 Mayor Nicola Smith City of Lynnwood	 Mayor Bruce Bassett City of Mercer Island
 Mayor Kenneth G. Hearing City of North Bend	 Mayor John Marchione City of Redmond	 Mayor Denis Law City of Renton
 Mayor Edward B. Murray City of Seattle	 Mayor Matthew R. Larson City of Snoqualmie	 Mayor Jim Haggerton City of Tukwila