

July 28, 2020

Governor Inslee and Members of the Washington State Legislature,

The COVID-19 crisis has amplified public awareness of the critical role that human services play in our lives. People who were struggling before the pandemic face even greater challenges. And, fallout from COVID-19 such as job loss, health crises and other factors have caused hundreds of thousands of Washingtonians to seek help – many for the first time. People are in desperate need.

As a human service member organization representing 33 organizations including health care institutions, schools, government entities, funders, and direct service providers in East King County, we know that requests for rent assistance, food, health care and other basic needs have skyrocketed. Even before the pandemic, nearly 38% of Eastside households spent more than 30% of their income on housing which makes them vulnerable to housing instability and homelessness. If cuts are made to these types of essential supports, it could intensify the crisis for people in need and cause poverty that can last for generations. On behalf of the [Eastside Human Services Forum](#), we ask that you do all that you can to protect human services in your budget deliberations.

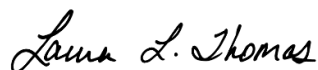
The virus has also exposed the gross inequities in our communities and the impacts of systemic racism. The health and economic impacts of the crisis have disproportionately impacted communities of color and individuals and families earning lower wages. We ask that you make budget and policy decisions that will achieve more equitable outcomes and build long-lasting, social and economic well-being for all Washingtonians.

There is a need for additional revenue given the impacts of COVID-19 on health and the economy, and the growing awareness of systemic racial inequities. We ask that you implement equitable revenue approaches that take into account diversity demographics and poverty rates and that address disproportionate impacts on those farthest from opportunity: people of color, immigrants and those with low-incomes.

Our continued investment in essential human services is not just an act of compassion, it is good economic development policy. Public spending on the lowest-income Washingtonians has a significant economic stimulus effect that will pull us out of this recession faster and position us for a quicker recovery. It would be short-sighted to cut the very programs that are helping people survive this crisis and that offer paths out of poverty.

Thank you for your consideration and for your service.

Sincerely,



Lauren Thomas  
Board Chair



*The mission of Eastside Human Services Forum is to foster strong public and private partnerships for a stable network of health and human services to benefit all East King County residents.*

[www.eastsideforum.org](http://www.eastsideforum.org)