

CITY OF SEATTLE

ORDINANCE _____

COUNCIL BILL _____

..title

AN ORDINANCE relating to termination of residential rental tenancies; prohibiting evictions of children, their families, and educators during the school year; and amending Subsection 22.206.160.C of the Seattle Municipal Code.

..body

WHEREAS, on November 2, 2015, the Mayor issued a Civil Emergency to address the

homelessness crisis in the City of Seattle, and on November 3, 2015, the City Council

adopted Resolution 31630, ratifying and confirming that Mayoral Proclamation of Civil

Emergency; and

WHEREAS, in September 2018, the Seattle Women’s Commission and the King County Bar

Association jointly published *Losing Home: The Human Cost of Eviction in Seattle*,

finding that households who are evicted face material hardships that make it more

difficult to secure safe and affordable housing and that the most disadvantaged groups

face the highest likelihood of eviction; and

WHEREAS, the *Losing Home* report found that most evicted respondents became homeless,

with 37.5 percent completely unsheltered, 25.0 percent living in a shelter or transitional

housing, and 25.0 percent staying with family or friends. Only 12.5 percent of evicted

respondents found another apartment or home to move into; and

WHEREAS, the *Losing Home* report further found that, “of evicted respondents with school-age

children, 85.7% said their children had to move schools after the eviction, and 87.5%

reported their children’s school performance suffered “very much” because of the

eviction.”; and

1 WHEREAS, the Losing Home report cites academic research showing that, “the eviction of
2 children and adolescents has serious and longstanding effects on their development and
3 overall well-being, including poor academic performance, delayed literacy skills, an up-
4 tick in dropout rates, and violent behavior”; and

5 WHEREAS, the Seattle City Council is committed to protecting children and students from the
6 destructive impacts of eviction; NOW, THEREFORE,

7 **BE IT ORDAINED BY THE CITY OF SEATTLE AS FOLLOWS:**

8 Section 1. Subsection 22.206.160.C of the Seattle Municipal Code, which section was
9 last amended by Ordinance 126278 is amended as follows:

10 **22.206.160 Duties of owners**

11 * * *

12 C. Just cause eviction

13 1. Pursuant to provisions of the Washington State Residential Landlord-
14 Tenant Act (RCW 59.18.290), an owner may not evict a residential tenant without a court order,
15 which can be issued by a court only after the tenant has an opportunity in a show cause hearing
16 to contest the eviction (RCW 59.18.380). An owner of a housing unit shall not evict or attempt to
17 evict any tenant, or otherwise terminate or attempt to terminate the tenancy of any tenant, unless
18 the owner can prove in court that just cause exists. Regardless of whether just cause for eviction
19 may exist, an owner may not evict a residential tenant from a rental housing unit if: the unit is
20 not registered with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections if required by Section
21 22.214.040; or if subsections 22.206.160.C.8, ~~((or))~~ 22.206.160.C.9, or 22.206.160.C.10 provide
22 the tenant a defense to the eviction.

1 An owner is in compliance with the registration requirement if the rental
2 housing unit is registered with the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections before
3 issuing a notice to terminate tenancy. The reasons for termination of tenancy listed below, and no
4 others, shall constitute just cause under this Section 22.206.160:

5 a. The tenant fails to comply with a 14 day notice to pay rent or
6 vacate pursuant to RCW 59.12.030(3); a ten day notice to comply or vacate pursuant to RCW
7 59.12.030(4); or a three day notice to vacate for waste, nuisance (including a drug-related
8 activity nuisance pursuant to chapter 7.43 RCW), or maintenance of an unlawful business or
9 conduct pursuant to RCW 59.12.030(5);

10 b. The tenant habitually fails to pay rent when due which causes the
11 owner to notify the tenant in writing of late rent four or more times in a 12 month period;

12 c. The tenant fails to comply with a ten day notice to comply or
13 vacate that requires compliance with a material term of the rental agreement or that requires
14 compliance with a material obligation under chapter 59.18 RCW;

15 d. The tenant habitually fails to comply with the material terms of the
16 rental agreement which causes the owner to serve a ten day notice to comply or vacate three or
17 more times in a 12 month period;

18 e. The owner seeks possession so that the owner or a member of the
19 owner's immediate family may occupy the unit as that person's principal residence and no
20 substantially equivalent unit is vacant and available in the same building, and the owner has
21 given the tenant at least 90 days' advance written notice of the date the tenant's possession is to
22 end. The Director may reduce the time required to give notice to no less than 20 days if the
23 Director determines that delaying occupancy will result in a personal hardship to the owner or to

1 the owner's immediate family. Personal hardship may include but is not limited to hardship
2 caused by illness or accident, unemployment, or job relocation. For the purposes of this Section
3 22.206.160, "Immediate family" includes the owner's domestic partner registered pursuant to
4 Section 1 of Ordinance 117244 or the owner's spouse, parents, grandparents, children, brothers
5 and sisters of the owner, of the owner's spouse, or of the owner's domestic partner. There is a
6 rebuttable presumption of a violation of this subsection 22.206.160.C.1.e if the owner or a
7 member of the owner's immediate family fails to occupy the unit as that person's principal
8 residence for at least 60 consecutive days during the 90 days immediately after the tenant
9 vacated the unit pursuant to a notice of termination or eviction using this subparagraph as the
10 cause for eviction;

11 f. The owner elects to sell a single-family dwelling unit and gives the
12 tenant at least 90 days' written notice prior to the date set for vacating, which date shall coincide
13 with the end of the term of a rental agreement, or if the agreement is month to month, with the
14 last day of a monthly period. The Director may reduce the time required to give notice to no less
15 than 60 days if the Director determines that providing 90 days' notice will result in a personal
16 hardship to the owner. Personal hardship may include but is not limited to hardship caused by
17 illness or accident, unemployment, or job relocation. For the purposes of this Section
18 22.206.160, an owner "elects to sell" when the owner makes reasonable attempts to sell the
19 dwelling within 30 days after the tenant has vacated, including, at a minimum, listing it for sale
20 at a reasonable price with a realty agency or advertising it for sale at a reasonable price in a
21 newspaper of general circulation. There shall be a rebuttable presumption that the owner did not
22 intend to sell the unit if:

1 1) Within 30 days after the tenant has vacated, the owner does
2 not list the single-family dwelling unit for sale at a reasonable price with a realty agency or
3 advertise it for sale at a reasonable price in a newspaper of general circulation, or

4 2) Within 90 days after the date the tenant vacated or the date
5 the property was listed for sale, whichever is later, the owner withdraws the rental unit from the
6 market, rents the unit to someone other than the former tenant, or otherwise indicates that the
7 owner does not intend to sell the unit;

8 g. The tenant's occupancy is conditioned upon employment on the
9 property and the employment relationship is terminated;

10 h. The owner seeks to do substantial rehabilitation in the building;
11 provided that, the owner must obtain a tenant relocation license if required by Chapter 22.210
12 and at least one permit necessary for the rehabilitation, other than a Master Use Permit, before
13 terminating the tenancy;

14 i. The owner (i) elects to demolish the building, convert it to a
15 cooperative, or convert it to a nonresidential use; provided that, the owner must obtain a tenant
16 relocation license if required by Chapter 22.210 and a permit necessary to demolish or change
17 the use before terminating any tenancy, or (ii) converts the building to a condominium provided
18 the owner complies with the provisions of Sections 22.903.030 and 22.903.035;

19 j. The owner seeks to discontinue use of a housing unit unauthorized
20 by Title 23 after receipt of a notice of violation. The owner is required to pay relocation
21 assistance to the tenant(s) of each such unit at least two weeks prior to the date set for
22 termination of the tenancy, at the rate of:

1 1) \$2,000 for a tenant household with an income during the
2 past 12 months at or below 50 percent of the County median income, or

3 2) Two months' rent for a tenant household with an income
4 during the past 12 months above 50 percent of the County median income;

5 k. The owner seeks to reduce the number of individuals residing in a
6 dwelling unit to comply with the maximum limit of individuals allowed to occupy one dwelling
7 unit, as required by Title 23, and:

8 1) a) The number of such individuals was more than is
9 lawful under the current version of Title 23 but was lawful under Title 23 or Title 24 on August
10 10, 1994;

11 b) That number has not increased with the knowledge
12 or consent of the owner at any time after August 10, 1994; and

13 c) The owner is either unwilling or unable to obtain a
14 permit to allow the unit with that number of residents.

15 2) The owner has served the tenants with a 30 day notice,
16 informing the tenants that the number of tenants exceeds the legal limit and must be reduced to
17 the legal limit,

18 3) After expiration of the 30 day notice, the owner has served
19 the tenants with and the tenants have failed to comply with a ten day notice to comply with the
20 limit on the number of occupants or vacate, and

21 4) If there is more than one rental agreement for the unit, the
22 owner may choose which agreements to terminate; provided that, the owner may either terminate
23 no more than the minimum number of rental agreements necessary to comply with the legal limit

1 on the number of occupants, or, at the owner's option, terminate only those agreements involving
2 the minimum number of occupants necessary to comply with the legal limit;

3 1. 1) The owner seeks to reduce the number of individuals who
4 reside in one dwelling unit to comply with the legal limit after receipt of a notice of violation of
5 the Title 23 restriction on the number of individuals allowed to reside in a dwelling unit, and:

6 a) The owner has served the tenants with a 30 day
7 notice, informing the tenants that the number of tenants exceeds the legal limit and must be
8 reduced to the legal limit; provided that no 30 day notice is required if the number of tenants was
9 increased above the legal limit without the knowledge or consent of the owner;

10 b) After expiration of the 30 day notice required by
11 subsection 22.206.160.1.1.a, or at any time after receipt of the notice of violation if no 30 day
12 notice is required pursuant to subsection 22.206.160.1.1.a, the owner has served the tenants with
13 and the tenants have failed to comply with a ten day notice to comply with the maximum legal
14 limit on the number of occupants or vacate; and

15 c) If there is more than one rental agreement for the
16 unit, the owner may choose which agreements to terminate; provided that the owner may either
17 terminate no more than the minimum number of rental agreements necessary to comply with the
18 legal limit on the number of occupants, or, at the option of the owner, terminate only those
19 agreements involving the minimum number of occupants necessary to comply with the legal
20 limit.

21 2) For any violation of the maximum legal limit on the
22 number of individuals allowed to reside in a unit that occurred with the knowledge or consent of

1 the owner, the owner is required to pay relocation assistance to the tenant(s) of each such unit at
2 least two weeks prior to the date set for termination of the tenancy, at the rate of:

3 a) \$2,000 for a tenant household with an income
4 during the past 12 months at or below 50 percent of the county median income, or

5 b) Two months' rent for a tenant household with an
6 income during the past 12 months above 50 percent of the county median income;

7 m. The owner seeks to discontinue use of an accessory dwelling unit
8 for which a permit has been obtained pursuant to Sections 23.44.041 and 23.45.545 after receipt
9 of a notice of violation of the development standards provided in those sections. The owner is
10 required to pay relocation assistance to the tenant household residing in such a unit at least two
11 weeks prior to the date set for termination of the tenancy, at the rate of:

12 1) \$2,000 for a tenant household with an income during the
13 past 12 months at or below 50 percent of the county median income, or

14 2) Two months' rent for a tenant household with an income
15 during the past 12 months above 50 percent of the county median income;

16 n. An emergency order requiring that the housing unit be vacated and
17 closed has been issued pursuant to Section 22.206.260 and the emergency conditions identified
18 in the order have not been corrected;

19 o. The owner seeks to discontinue sharing with a tenant of the
20 owner's own housing unit, i.e., the unit in which the owner resides, seeks to terminate the
21 tenancy of a tenant of an accessory dwelling unit authorized pursuant to Sections 23.44.041 and
22 23.45.545 that is accessory to the housing unit in which the owner resides, or seeks to terminate
23 the tenancy of a tenant in a single-family dwelling unit and the owner resides in an accessory

1 dwelling unit on the same lot. This subsection 22.206.160.C.1.o does not apply if the owner has
2 received a notice of violation of the development standards of Section 23.44.041. If the owner
3 has received such a notice of violation, subsection 22.206.160.C.1.m applies;

4 p. A tenant, or with the consent of the tenant, the tenant's subtenant,
5 sublessee, resident, or guest, has engaged in criminal activity on the premises, or on the property
6 or public right-of-way abutting the premises, and the owner has specified in the notice of
7 termination the crime alleged to have been committed and the general facts supporting the
8 allegation, and has assured that the Seattle Department of Construction and Inspections has
9 recorded receipt of a copy of the notice of termination. For purposes of this subsection
10 22.206.160.C.1.p, a person has "engaged in criminal activity" if the person:

11 1) Engages in drug-related activity that would constitute a
12 violation of chapters 69.41, 69.50, or 69.52 RCW, or

13 2) Engages in activity that is a crime under the laws of this
14 state, but only if the activity substantially affects the health or safety of other tenants or the
15 owner.

16 2. Any rental agreement provision which waives or purports to waive any
17 right, benefit or entitlement created by this subsection 22.206.160.C shall be deemed void and of
18 no lawful force or effect.

19 3. With any termination notices required by law, owners terminating any
20 tenancy protected by this Section 22.206.160 shall advise the affected tenant or tenants in writing
21 of the reasons for the termination and the facts in support of those reasons.

22 4. If a tenant who has received a notice of termination of tenancy claiming
23 subsection 22.206.160.C.1.e, 22.206.160.C.1.f, or 22.206.160.C.1.m as the ground for

1 termination believes that the owner does not intend to carry out the stated reason for eviction and
2 makes a complaint to the Director, then the owner must, within ten days of being notified by the
3 Director of the complaint, complete and file with the Director a certification stating the owner's
4 intent to carry out the stated reason for the eviction. The failure of the owner to complete and file
5 such a certification after a complaint by the tenant shall be a defense for the tenant in an eviction
6 action based on this ground.

7 5. In any action commenced to evict or to otherwise terminate the tenancy of
8 any tenant, it shall be a defense to the action that there was no just cause for such eviction or
9 termination as provided in this Section 22.206.160.

10 6. It shall be a violation of this Section 22.206.160 for any owner to evict or
11 attempt to evict any tenant or otherwise terminate or attempt to terminate the tenancy of any
12 tenant using a notice that references subsections 22.206.160.C.1.e, 22.206.160.C.1.f,
13 22.206.160.C.1.h, 22.206.160.C.1.k, 22.206.160.C.1.l, or 22.206.160.C.1.m as grounds for
14 eviction or termination of tenancy without fulfilling or carrying out the stated reason for or
15 condition justifying the termination of such tenancy.

16 7. An owner who evicts or attempts to evict a tenant or who terminates or
17 attempts to terminate the tenancy of a tenant using a notice which references subsections
18 22.206.160.C.1.e, 22.206.160.C.1.f or 22.206.160.C.1.h as the ground for eviction or termination
19 of tenancy without fulfilling or carrying out the stated reason for or condition justifying the
20 termination of such tenancy shall be liable to such tenant in a private right for action for damages
21 up to \$2,000, costs of suit, or arbitration and reasonable attorney's fees.

22 8. Except as provided in subsection 22.206.160.C.8.d, it is a defense to
23 eviction if:

1 a. The eviction would result in the tenant having to vacate the
2 housing unit at any time between December 1 and March 1; and

3 b. The tenant household is a moderate-income household as defined
4 in Section 23.84A.016; and

5 c. The housing unit that the tenant would have to vacate is owned by
6 a person who owns more than four rental housing units in The City of Seattle. For purposes of
7 this subsection 22.206.160.C.8.c, "owns" includes having an ownership interest in the housing
8 units.

9 d. If the reason for termination of the tenancy is due to conditions
10 described in subsections 22.206.160.C.1.e, 22.206.160.C.1.f provided that the tenant was
11 provided at least 90 days' written notice prior to the date set for vacating the unit,
12 22.206.160.C.1.j, 22.206.160.C.1.k, 22.206.160.C.1.m, 22.206.160.C.1.n, 22.206.160.C.1.o, or
13 22.206.160.C.1.p, or if the reason for termination is due to the tenant's failure to comply with a
14 three day or ten day notice to vacate for a drug-related activity nuisance pursuant to chapter 7.43
15 RCW or maintenance of an unlawful business or conduct pursuant to RCW 59.12.030(5) or
16 because the tenant's conduct has a substantial detrimental impact on, or constitutes an imminent
17 threat to, the health or safety of other tenants in the rental building or the owner, the eviction may
18 occur as otherwise allowed by law.

19 e. A rent mitigation fund is created to provide funds to eligible low-
20 income tenant households at risk of residential eviction during the period described in subsection
21 22.206.160.C.8, if other sources of funds are not available to assist the tenant, or to provide
22 financial assistance to a non-profit corporation or other housing provider that cannot evict a
23 tenant from a rental housing unit during the period described in subsection 22.206.160.C.8

1 because the unit is subject to restrictions on tenant incomes or rent as a condition of that
2 assistance.

3 1) Tenant eligibility. To be eligible to receive funds, (1) the
4 reason for termination must include nonpayment of rent; and (2) the tenant household must be a
5 low-income household as defined in Section 23.84A.016; and (3) the tenant must demonstrate
6 that the tenant does not have the financial resources to avoid eviction; and (4) the tenant must
7 request mitigation funds on or before the date a writ of restitution is executed.

8 2) Housing provider eligibility. To be eligible to receive funds
9 the housing provider shall (1) demonstrate that an eviction was delayed during this period
10 because the tenant raised the defense described in subsection 22.206.160.C.8; and (2)
11 demonstrate that the tenant does not have financial resources available to pay rent during the
12 period described in subsection 22.206.160.C.8; and (3) demonstrate that the tenant resides in a
13 unit that is subject to restrictions on tenant incomes or rent; and (4) sign an agreement stating
14 that the housing provider will not report the tenant's delinquency on rent payment to credit
15 reporting agencies.

16 3) The Director shall have rulemaking authority to administer
17 the fund. This authority includes the ability to have the fund administered by a public or private
18 organization having experience administering or capable of administering similar tenant
19 assistance programs. If by rule the Director determines that payments shall be made directly to a
20 landlord, the landlord shall sign an agreement with the Director prior to payment stating that the
21 landlord will not report the tenant's delinquent rent payment to credit reporting agencies.

22 4) The availability of funds is subject to the existence of
23 budget appropriations for that purpose. A request for funding shall be denied if insufficient funds

1 are available. The City is not civilly or criminally liable for failure to provide funding and no
2 penalty or cause of action may be brought against the City resulting from the provision or lack of
3 provision of funds.

4 5) When a landlord issues a notice to terminate tenancy due to
5 nonpayment of rent, the notice must contain information to the tenant about how to access the
6 tenant mitigation fund. The landlord is not required to provide this information if insufficient
7 funds have been appropriated by the City Council to provide the funds for mitigation. The
8 information for the notice shall be adopted by the Seattle Department of Construction and
9 Inspections by rule.

10 9. a. Subject to the requirements of subsection 22.206.160.C.9.b, it is a
11 defense to eviction if the eviction would result in the tenant having to vacate the housing unit
12 within six months after the termination of the Mayor's eviction moratorium, and if the reason for
13 terminating the tenancy is:

14 1) The tenant fails to comply with a 14-day notice to pay rent
15 or vacate pursuant to RCW 59.12.030(3) for rent due during, or within six months after the
16 termination of, the Mayor's residential eviction moratorium; or

17 2) The tenant habitually fails to pay rent resulting in four or
18 more pay-or-vacate notices in a 12-month period.

19 For purposes of this subsection 22.206.160.C.9, "termination of the
20 Mayor's residential eviction moratorium" means termination of subsection 1.C (creating a
21 defense to a pending eviction action) of the moratorium on residential evictions ordered by the
22 Mayor's civil emergency order, as amended by the Council in Resolution 31938 on March 16,
23 2020.

1 b. The tenant may invoke the defense provided in subsection
2 22.206.160.C.9.a only if the tenant has submitted a declaration or self-certification asserting the
3 tenant has suffered a financial hardship and is therefore unable to pay rent.

4 c. If a landlord issues a notice to terminate a tenancy due to a reason
5 listed in subsections 22.206.160.C.9.a.1—2, and if the landlord issues that notice within six
6 months after the termination of the Mayor's residential eviction moratorium, the notice must
7 contain the following statement: "If you cannot pay rent, during or within 6 months after the end
8 of the Mayor's moratorium on evictions, your inability to pay is a defense to eviction that you
9 may raise in court." It is a defense to eviction if the notice does not contain that statement.

10 d. An award of attorneys' fees and statutory court costs to a landlord
11 arising from an eviction proceeding arising from a notice to terminate a tenancy due to a reason
12 listed in subsections 22.206.160.C.9.a.1—2 is prohibited unless otherwise allowed by law.

13 10. Except as provided in subsection 22.206.160.C.10.d, it is a defense to
14 eviction if:

15 a. The eviction would result in the tenant having to vacate the
16 housing unit during the school year. For the purpose of this section "school year" shall be
17 defined as the period of days beginning on the first day school, and ending at the end of the last
18 day of school for first through twelfth grade students of Seattle Public Schools or its successor in
19 any academic year. If in any academic year the first through twelfth grades of Seattle Public
20 Schools or its successor have differences in their first or last days of school. The "school year"
21 shall begin on the earliest of those dates, and shall end on the latest of those dates; and

22 b. The tenant is any of the following:

1 1) Any child or student. For the purpose of this subsection
2 22.206.160.C.10 “child or student” shall mean any person who is under the age of 18 years or
3 who is currently enrolled as a student in any grade of school up to and including grade 12; or

4 2) Anyone who is a legal guardian of a child or student, or has
5 a court-recognized caregiver authorization affidavit for the child or student, or has provided full-
6 time custodial care of the child or student pursuant to an agreement with the legal guardian or
7 court-recognized caregiver of the child or student and has been providing that care for at least
8 one year or half of the lifetime of the child or student, whichever is less; or

9 3) Any educator. For the purpose of this subsection
10 22.206.160.C.10 “educator” shall mean any person who works at a school in Seattle as an
11 employee or independent contractor of the school or of the governing body that has jurisdiction
12 over the school, including but not limited to all teachers, substitute teachers, paraprofessionals,
13 substitute paraprofessionals, administrators, administrative staff, counselors, social workers,
14 psychologists, school nurses, speech pathologists, custodians, cafeteria workers, and
15 maintenance workers. “School” includes any state-licensed child care center, state-licensed
16 family day care, and any public, private, or parochial institution that provides educational
17 instruction for students in any or all of the grades and age groups up to and including twelfth
18 grade; and

19 c. If the reason for termination of the tenancy is due to conditions
20 described in 22.206.160.C.1.j, 22.206.160.C.1.k, 22.206.160.C.1.l, 22.206.160.C.1.m,
21 22.206.160.C.1.n, 22.206.160.C.1.o, or 22.206.160.C.1.p, or if the reason for termination is due
22 to the tenant’s failure to comply with a three day notice to vacate for a drug-related activity

1 nuisance pursuant to chapter 7.43 RCW or maintenance of an unlawful business or conduct
2 pursuant to RCW 59.12.030(5), the eviction may occur as otherwise allowed by law.

3 Section 2. This ordinance shall take effect and be in force 30 days after its approval by
4 the Mayor, but if not approved and returned by the Mayor within ten days after presentation, it
5 shall take effect as provided by Seattle Municipal Code Section 1.04.020.

6 Passed by the City Council the _____ day of _____, 2021,
7 and signed by me in open session in authentication of its passage this _____ day of
8 _____, 2021.

9 _____
10 President _____ of the City Council

11 Approved / returned unsigned / vetoed this _____ day of _____, 2021.

12 _____
13 Jenny A. Durkan, Mayor

14 Filed by me this _____ day of _____, 2021.
15 _____
16 Monica Martinez Simmons, City Clerk

17 (Seal)