

May 4, 2020

Dear Council President Gonzalez:

Interfaith Climate Action - First Hill (ICA-FH) endorses the concept of a payroll tax to address the immediate needs of the newly unemployed and underemployed, to house the homeless, and to reduce climate-disrupting greenhouse gas emissions. We applaud Councilmembers Tammy Morales and Kshama Sawant for proposing a bill that is a good starting point for fair and effective legislation.

ICA-FH calls on the Council and the Mayor to perfect the bill, taking into account the condition of the City general fund, the financial condition of companies subject to the tax, and above all, the appropriate cutoff for payroll size, and the high-priority needs the tax addresses.

Our first reason for supporting a payroll tax is that the use of new revenues to reduce home-generated greenhouse gas emissions is squarely within ICA-FH's mission of supporting actions that reduce climate disruption and opposing those that worsen this global problem.

Second, with the simultaneous crises of rising climate disruption, homelessness, and the personal and municipal financial hardship caused by COVID-19, new revenues are needed if the City is to mount an effective response to these challenges.

Third, in this state with the most regressive tax system in the nation, we must not place the burden of new taxes on the backs of financially strapped households. A tax on the city's largest businesses is the right response to the financial crisis.

The City Council has set -- and failed to meet -- a succession of greenhouse gas emission reduction targets. Even while failing to meet 2020 emission targets, the City Council's Green New Deal resolution last year adopted the most ambitious goal to date: totally eliminating "climate pollutants" by 2030. Without an equally ambitious set of incentives and regulations, it will be impossible to meet this goal by 2030, 2040 or 2050.

Bold action is needed now in order to prevent utter climate catastrophe for our children and grandchildren. As people of faith, we call on the Council and Mayor to embrace this moral imperative. By providing \$125 million per year for home energy improvements, the Morales-Sawant property tax bill is the first proposal to deal with the climate crisis at the scale of the problem.

The proposed spending in support of the Green New Deal would support weatherization of homes, installation of solar panels, conversion of home heat systems to non-polluting electric systems, and worker training in these new jobs. Oil and gas home heating represent nearly one-sixth of Seattle's core greenhouse gas emissions,

and are an emission source that the City can effectively influence. Less affluent homeowners will need help paying for non-polluting heat pumps.

The revenue for home energy improvements and construction of new social housing will create thousands of new well-paying jobs. This is a jobs bill.

We recognize that this is a difficult time financially for the City and for businesses of almost all sizes. This will require cooperation among our elected officials to enact a fair and effective funding package. But in the face of this once-in-a-generation financial and humanitarian crisis, we call on our elected officials to act on behalf of those in the most pain.

Sincerely,

Keith Ervin
Joan Bowers
Margie Coles
Marilyn Cornwell
Cynthia Ervin
Elizabeth Heath
Jeri Hodgkin
Richard Hodgkin
Nora Langan
Donna Ward
Imogene Williams
Jacqueline Williams
Linda Zaugg

Interfaith Climate Action - First Hill is a collaboration between Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue and Seattle First Baptist Church. This statement is the view of ICA-FH and does not necessarily reflect the opinions of the governing boards or congregations of the synagogue and church.