

Support fair wages for workers providing human services to help all Seattle residents reach their full potential!

This summer, providers and elected officials had many conversations about the benefit to building strong communities of adjusting human service providers' contracts annually to stay even with costs to provide services that are increased by inflation. In these conversations there was one point we all agreed on: Human services workers are dangerously underpaid for the difficult work we do. The people who take care of our children, provide healthcare in community-based clinics, help people without homes connect with resources, engage our elders, support our youth, and care for people with disabilities are often paid at such a low level that they qualify for the very same public support programs they administer. **Their pay does not reflect the education required, difficulty, or value of their work to build the economic, emotional, physical, developmental, and social well-being for all community members.** The inflation adjustment stabilized the contracted services, but did not address this central challenge.

NOW we have the opportunity to take the meaningful first step to correct the long-term legacy of under-paying human service workers for the skills, education, experience, and integral importance of this work.

This pay discrepancy, with compensation well below the market rate for jobs with similar worth or value, means that **it is increasingly difficult for human services workers to live in our communities and stay in human services jobs.** This results in high turnover and the disruption of relationships between providers and program participants which are essential for the successful outcomes we all want, as well as resulting in additional recruitment and training costs for providers. Equitable pay would recognize the important role human service organizations play in training the future workforce, offering attractive entry-level positions, and pathways for professional advancement, thus strengthening the organizations that build well-being in our communities.

The next step to solve this inherent weakness in our support system is for the City of Seattle to work with providers to conduct a pay equity analysis of human services jobs as compared with jobs in different fields, especially those in the private sector, that require similar skills, education, and difficulty by allocating resources for a **robust comparable worth analysis of benchmark jobs. This would require an allocation of \$500,000 to \$600,000 in 2020.**

King County is planning a wage survey of providers and while this information may be useful, it does not look at the core components of the jobs and how they are compensated. Only a true comparable worth analysis will take this meaningful step.

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