



**King County**

**Reagan Dunn**

Councilmember, District 9

**Metropolitan King County Council**

December 7, 2021

Marc Dones  
Chief Executive Officer  
King County Regional Homelessness Authority

Dear Marc Dones:

Last week, the King County Regional Homelessness Authority (KCRHA) announced that it will not perform the federally-required Point in Time Count of King County's homeless population in 2022, making us unique among counties across the nation in forgoing the count. I am concerned that the failure to conduct the count for the second year in a row will not only result in a loss of valuable data, but will diminish a major measure of accountability for the hundreds of millions of dollars the taxpayers have spent in this area.

Homelessness is among the top issues of our region and I believe one of the greatest challenges facing our generation. Having a barometer to gauge the impact of our homelessness response is crucial in our fight to end homelessness. The Point in Time Count plays the valuable role of revealing trends in needs and behaviors of those who are experiencing homelessness and allows us to have a year-by-year approximate comparison of the growth of our homeless population. Without the Point in Time Count, policymakers would have very little understanding of the recent trends for those who are living unsheltered on our streets.

The rationale provided by the KCRHA for not performing the Point in Time Count is that an undercount would be "harmful in skewing the narrative" and limit "the budget and resources dedicated to solutions." This reasoning appears to me to be short-sighted and only hurts our ability to respond to the homelessness crisis in the long term.

Firstly, full transparency is key to good government. I would warn against avoiding the collection of data because of fears that the information will not fit a certain narrative. The Point in Time Count is not intended or considered to be a perfect measurement of homelessness, but remains a critically important source of information about how many people are living unsheltered in King County. While I have also been critical of the Point in Time Count in the past because the data is less than accurate, I remain aware that it offers a basic understanding of the year-to-year change in our homeless population and it can be a valuable tool for spotting emerging trends and issues.

Second, the concern that the Point in Time Count will limit the budget we receive to fight homelessness may be misplaced. In fact, there could be serious funding consequences for declining to perform the

Point in Time Count. The Count is mandated by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) to be performed every two years in order to qualify as an agency that can receive federal funds. Though KCRHA received a waiver for the 2021 Point in Time Count due to COVID-19, no such waiver has been issued for 2022, meaning that KCRHA is knowingly violating the federal regulation in this area. Importantly, by making the unusual decision to forgo the Point in Time Count, KCRHA risks the possibility that we may not receive federal funding for homelessness services in the future. This is a prospect that should alarm everyone in our region who cares about helping those who are experiencing homelessness.

I am very concerned that KCRHA's decision-making process leading to the choice to forgo the federally-required Point in Time Count is misguided and strongly urge you to reconsider. The newly-formed King County Regional Homelessness Authority is still only just beginning to get off the ground, and should make decisions that improve the level of transparency and build community trust in the organization's authority. While I understand the KCRHA would like to see reform in certain areas, it is disappointing to see that the organization cannot pursue reform while also fulfilling basic funding requirements. I hope for the sake of our fight against homelessness that KCRHA reconsiders its approach.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Reagan Dunn". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Reagan Dunn  
Vice Chairman  
King County Council