

Faith leaders call on Seattle City Council to adopt Tax Amazon legislation for emergency COVID-19 relief, housing, jobs, and Green New Deal

Dear Seattle City Councilmembers:

We, the undersigned faith leaders from Jewish, Christian, Muslim, Buddhist, Sikh and all journeys of faith, call on you, our Seattle City Council, to adopt and approve the emergency COVID-19 Relief Tax Amazon legislation sponsored by Councilmember Kshama Sawant and Councilmember Tammy J. Morales.

The people in our communities of faith are going through serious challenging times caused by the Coronavirus pandemic, with loss of elders and loved ones, loss of jobs and income, loss of housing and basic public needs.

Meanwhile, our members who are healthcare workers, grocery workers, bus drivers, truck drivers, warehouse and delivery workers, sanitation workers, and emergency workers serving our communities, are at risk, oftentimes in the absence of basic personal protection equipment, let alone hazard pay, sick pay, PPE, or childcare. We need the leadership of the entire Seattle City Council for COVID-19 Relief through this Tax Amazon legislation.

For hundreds of thousands of our workers, this crisis will last well beyond 2020. As Harvard economist Kenneth S. Rogoff has said, we might see “the mother of all financial crises.” We, as people of faith, must act out of love of neighbor as ourselves by putting into motion, now, the massive jobs and housing investments that our workers need. This Tax Amazon legislation sponsored by Councilmembers Sawant and Morales and approved by you the City Council, represents both an immediate and a long-term solution to working-class households, individuals and their families, your very constituencies, throughout our city.

This legislation as written would tax Amazon and the other largest two percent of companies in Seattle. With your leadership, the tax would raise \$500 million a year beginning in June 2020, with \$200 million dedicated this year to emergency COVID-19 relief to help up to 100,000 working-class households. Beginning in 2021, the tax would fund social housing and the Green New Deal in order to address the city’s critical housing emergency and the climate crisis. This legislation calls for Priority Hire and Community Workforce Agreements for all of the construction and renovation projects,

which have the potential to create and support thousands of well-paying, union jobs in the years ahead.

The tax will be paid by only Amazon and the largest two percent of corporations in Seattle – those with annual payrolls over \$7 million – companies whose wealth has soared in recent years as working people have struggled and suffered. From January 2020, Amazon’s Jeff Bezos has seen his wealth increase by \$10 billion. We know the funds are available to help the people. This Tax Amazon legislation will fund COVID-19 relief. It will fund affordable housing. It will fund a Green New Deal. This legislation also exempts all nonprofits, all grocery stores, all government and educational employers, regardless of size.

We clearly need you, the Seattle City Council, to lead and pass this legislation as is. Your swift and timely approval of this legislation will provide immediate COVID-19 Relief in our city, for our people, as no other legislation can or will. We faith leaders urge you to do the right thing and stand by your colleagues and constituencies and vote Yes on this legislation for COVID-19 Relief, affordable housing and a Green New Deal. Our communities depend on you to do so. This situation is unprecedented. Few if any City Councils have had an opportunity to do so much good. This is the time.

Grace and peace as you do the right thing,

[signing in an individual capacity]

1. The Reverend Angela Ying, Bethany United Church of Christ
2. Imam Jamal Rahman, Interfaith Community Sanctuary
3. Aneelah Afzali, Executive Director, MAPS-AMEN
4. Michael Ramos, Executive Director, The Church Council of Greater Seattle
5. The Reverend Robert Jeffrey, New Hope Missionary Baptist Church of Seattle
6. Elise DeGooyer, Co-Director, Faith Action Network
7. Rev. Mike Denton, Conference Minister, The Pacific Northwest Conference of the United Church of Christ
8. Rev. Ruth Marston-Bihl, Trinity United Methodist Church, Ballard
9. Reverend Richard Gamble, Keystone United Church of Christ
10. Rev. Dr. Kelle Brown, Lead Pastor, Plymouth Church UCC
11. Rev. Bianca Davis-Lovelace, Executive Director, Renton Ecumenical Association of Churches
12. Pastor Jerry Chang, Taiwanese Christian Church
13. Rev. Ryan Lambert, Kirkland Congregational United Church of Christ

14. Rev. Roberta Rominger, Pacific Northwest Conference, United Church of Christ
15. The Reverend Shelly Fayette, Christ Church, Seattle
16. Reverend Paul Benz, Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
17. Rev. Dr. Shannon Smythe, First Presbyterian Church of Westfield
18. Imam Mohammed Adnan, Khalid Muslim Association
19. Reverend Cecilia Kingman, Unitarian Universalist Church
20. Rev. Steven Davis, Executive Minister, Plymouth Church United Church of Christ
21. Rabbi David Basior, Kadima Reconstructionist Community
22. Rabbi Michael Lerner, Beyt Tikkun
23. Imam Husam Rabi, SALAAM Center
24. Pastor Dani Forbess, Northminster Presbyterian Church
25. Reverend Gary Southerton, Broadview Community United Church of Christ
26. Mr. Aaron Scott, Episcopal Diocese of Olympia: Missioner for Anti-Poverty Organizing
27. Reverend Neal Sharpe, Valley and Mountain
28. The Rev. Richard W. Gillett, Episcopal Diocese of Olympia
29. Rev. Emily Tanis-Likkel, United Church of Christ
30. Rev. Lina Thompson, Lake Burien Presbyterian Church
31. Reverend Gary Southerton, Broadview Community United Church of Christ
32. Reverend David Kratz, Retired
33. Rabbi Maurice Harris, Reconstructing Judaism
34. Rev. Cassie Emanuel, Retired Clergy, University Congregational UCC
35. Chaplain Resident Elizabeth Gordon, Plymouth Church, United Church of Christ
36. Evangelist Allison Simon, Revelation 7 Ministry
37. Ms. Nina Laboy, Crones Buddhist Sangha
38. Steve Clagett, Chair, UCC Justice & Witness Ministry Committee and All Pilgrims Christian Church
39. Shahid Haq, Downtown Muslim association
40. Kathy Heffernan, hospital chaplain; member, St. Patrick's Catholic church
41. Muslimah Janice Tufte, Islam
42. Ms. Mary DeVry, Fauntleroy UCC & Westside Interfaith Network
43. Mr. Harry Smith Bethany UCC
44. Mr. Abdinasir Mohamed, Muslim community
45. Ann Holmes Redding, Interfaith Community Sanctuary and Cherry Street Friday Prayer Circle
46. Lin Hagedorn, Northshore UCC
47. Megan Slade, Bethany UCC
48. Karin Strand, Kol Haneshamah
49. Dina Burstein, Kadima Jewish Reconstructionist Community
50. Anessa Novasio, Valley and Mountain

51. Nikkita Oliver, JD, Seattle People's Party, Black Lives Matter, No Youth Jail, Creative Justice
52. Community Organizer KL Shannon, Bethany UCC; YUIR, No New Youth Jail
53. Dr. John Ruhland, Bethany United Church of Christ
54. Attorney Bernice Funk, United Church of Christ
55. Mr. Rodney Herold, Valley and Mountain
56. Leah Nguyen, Youth Development Manager
57. Jasper Tollefson, Bethany United Church of Christ
58. Corey Hubbard, Bethany United Church of Christ
59. Ms. Mia Mlekarov, Bethany United Church of Christ
60. Carroll Jackson, Bethany United Church of Christ
61. Lynn Heinisch, Ubuntu
62. Joe Kadushin
63. Mr. Bob Barnes
64. Mr. Rusty West
65. Jared Howe
66. Rita Wiitala
67. Kevin Burdet, Christian
68. Kiri Schultz
69. Professor Emeritus Judith Zeh
70. Douglas Brown, Treasurer, Kadima Reconstructionist Jewish Community
71. Mollie Wolf, Youth and Family Organizer, Kadima Reconstructionist Community
72. Jonathan Rosenblum, Immediate Past Board President, Kadima Reconstructionist Community