RETTC Real Estate Technology & Transformation Center

August 11, 2026

Mayor Katie B. Wilson
600 4th Ave, Seattle, WA
7th Floor
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Concerns with Rental Fee Ordinance #126053

Dear Mayor Wilson and Members of the Seattle City Council:

The Real Estate Technology and Transformation Center (RETTC) appreciates your commitment to improving price transparency for renters. RETTC brings together real estate companies and technology providers to blaze a path forward for digital transformation in America. The Center serves as the preeminent advocacy, resource and networking platform for real estate and tech leaders as they navigate a long-term and complex technology-enabled transformation. This evolution will impact the renters and communities we serve, help address our nation's long-term housing challenges, improve business operations and enhance our ability to drive innovation across the economy.

We share the Council's goal of improving transparency for renters. However, we write to express serious concerns regarding the rental fee ordinance (#126053) under consideration today by the Seattle City Council. This ordinance would add to the cost of rent by injecting complexity and confusion into routine operations, slow down leasing, divert resources away from technology upgrades and resident-facing service improvements, and threaten affordability.

We support transparency and appropriate protections against undisclosed or unfair mandatory charges. But the ordinance goes substantially further by restricting housing providers' ability to recover legitimate costs associated with optional services, resident choices, and resident noncompliance. Those costs do not disappear when a fee is prohibited or capped. Instead, they must be incorporated into rents paid by all residents—including residents who do not use the service or create the expense. Examples include:

- Package and mail services: the extraordinary growth in package deliveries has imposed significant operational costs on rental communities, including staff time, package rooms and lockers, security systems, storage space, and management of lost or misdelivered items. Some residents receive packages almost daily; others rarely do. A reasonable package-service fee allows the residents who make substantial use of these services to bear the associated costs. Prohibiting such charges does not make package management free—it simply requires housing providers to spread those costs across the rent paid by every resident.
- Payment Conveniences: Residents increasingly expect multiple electronic and expedited payment options, some of which impose transaction and processing costs on housing providers. Where a resident voluntarily chooses a payment method that generates an incremental third-party cost, providers should be permitted to pass through a reasonable charge for that convenience, particularly where a practical fee-free payment method remains available.

Renters Insurance Compliance

We also are particularly concerned about restrictions affecting renters insurance compliance. Requiring renters insurance is an important risk-management tool at a time when property insurance costs are increasing dramatically. A resident's failure to maintain required coverage can expose not only the housing provider, but also neighboring residents, to losses arising from fires, water damage, and other incidents. Housing providers need a practical and effective means of enforcing lease requirements that residents maintain required coverage. If providers cannot recover reasonable costs associated with monitoring compliance or addressing a resident's failure to maintain required insurance, the costs and risks created by noncompliance are shifted to the property and ultimately to other residents. The City should encourage—not impede—straightforward mechanisms that promote compliance with legitimate insurance requirements and protect innocent residents from losses caused by others.

Liability and Enforcement Provisions

Finally, the ordinance's materially expanded liability and enforcement provisions will themselves increase the cost of providing rental housing. New statutory claims, penalties, damages, compliance obligations, and litigation risks require additional systems, training, legal review, insurance, and operational resources. These are real costs, particularly for housing providers who are already confronting substantial increases in insurance, labor, maintenance, utilities, and regulatory compliance expenses. Housing providers cannot indefinitely absorb these costs; ultimately, they affect the rents necessary to operate housing in Seattle. We therefore urge the Council and Mayor to distinguish between unfair or undisclosed mandatory charges and reasonable cost recovery for optional services, resident-selected conveniences, and costs resulting from a resident's failure to satisfy lease obligations. Protecting renters from unfair fees is a legitimate goal, but shifting individualized costs onto the broader renter population ultimately makes housing less—not more—affordable.

RETTC and its members stand ready to collaborate on thoughtful, pro-housing, pro-renter policies. Please don’t hesitate to reach out—we would welcome the opportunity to work with you on solutions that benefit renters and providers alike.

Sincerely,

Kevin Donnelly
Executive Director and Chief Advocacy Officer
Real Estate Technology & Transformation Center

cc: Members of the Seattle City Council