

RESOLUTION IN SUPPORT OF SEATTLE INITIATIVE 131, TO TAX BIG BUSINESSES IN ORDER TO FUND AFFORDABLE GREEN HOUSING IN SEATTLE

WHEREAS Seattle has long had an extreme housing affordability crisis, with the nation’s highest level of homelessness per capita and the most regressive tax structure in the state of Washington – which itself is widely recognized as having the most regressive tax structure in the entire United States; and

WHEREAS the COVID-19 pandemic has caused a once-in-a-century healthcare crisis, with loss of livelihoods as well as lives throughout our state, including massive sudden unemployment; and

WHEREAS a developing climate crisis further threatens the long-term stability of human societies around the world, including our own; and

WHEREAS ordinary people, disproportionately people of color, bear the brunt of the housing, COVID-19, and unemployment crises, as well as that of the looming climate crisis, all while continuing to shoulder a heavy burden of taxation for services and infrastructure; and

WHEREAS Amazon and the other wealthiest businesses in Seattle make billions in profits annually, and pay little or nothing in taxes due to extraordinary corporate tax breaks; and

WHEREAS Seattle City Councilmembers Kshama Sawant and Tammy Morales have introduced a big-business payroll tax ordinance to fund COVID-19 relief, affordable housing, and jobs, but it is unclear whether the necessary Council majority will be able to stand up to the inevitable political pressure from the affected businesses – thereby requiring, in the public interest, the backup option of a ballot initiative; and

WHEREAS [Seattle Ballot Initiative 131, “An Act to Tax Big Businesses to Fund Affordable Green Housing in the City of Seattle,”](#) has been drafted as a grassroots proposal to enact a 0.7% payroll tax on the top 2% of Seattle’s wealthiest corporations (approximately 800 businesses, excluding small businesses and all non-profits, grocery stores, co-ops and hospitals); and

WHEREAS 75% of the tax revenue generated by Initiative 131 will fund the construction and acquisition of Affordable Green Housing, providing high-quality and energy-efficient social housing built pursuant to Seattle’s “Priority Hire” criteria; and the remaining 25% will be used for Green New Deal programs, including installation of solar power, weatherization, and transitioning of existing homes from natural gas and heating oil to electricity – all comprising a major jobs program, creating tens of thousands of high-quality, union jobs over the next decade (the similar Sawant-Morales big-business tax proposal has been estimated as creating 34,000 jobs);

THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that we wholeheartedly endorse Seattle’s grassroots Initiative 131, imposing a payroll tax on certain entities engaged in business in Seattle, declaring an emergency, and establishing an immediate effective date upon a 3/4 vote of the City Council; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that we urge our members and others to join in the effort to qualify I-131 for a public vote, by contacting the campaign at <https://www.facebook.com/TaxAmazon/> or info@taxamazon.net (or at 916-352-3273), in order to assist in the unusual and unprecedented signature-gathering effort necessitated by current COVID-19 strictures; and

BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED that we recognize I-131 as a powerful example, inspiring working people throughout Western Washington and around the country to work toward progressive taxation, greater social equity and a greener infrastructure.

Adopted May 26, 2020 by the Martin Luther King County Democratic Central Committee