

(Declaration of Gary Kato)

DECLARATION OF GARY KATO regarding public emergency relating to homelessness:

I, Gary Kato, declare under penalty of perjury under the laws of the state of Washington, that the follow is true and correct:

1. I am over the age of 18 years and am competent to testify as to the matters contained herein, and all statements made herein are based upon my own personal knowledge and belief.

2. In 2013, I was appointed as the Division Manager of the City of Tacoma Solid Waste Management Division (hereafter the "Solid Waste Utility"), responsible for the direct management and operation of the Solid Waste Utility. In 2012 was appointed as the Acting Division Manager of the Solid Waste Utility.

3. I have been an employee of the Solid Waste Utility since January of 1994. I began my employment with the Solid Waste Utility as a Source Control Supervisor and then as Assistant Division Manager. During my employment with the Solid Waste Utility, I have worked on solid and hazardous waste issues and have been tasked with addressing some vector related issues, and have used my public health background to address specific potential environmental health issues.

4. From July of 1987 to January of 1994, I was employed by the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department (hereafter "TPCHD") as an Environmental Health Specialist I, II (Technical Lead), III (Supervisor) and Section Manager in the Waste

Management Section. As an Environmental Health Specialist I and II, I was responsible for inspection, monitoring and enforcement of solid waste handling facilities and programs related to hazardous materials and special wastes. My assigned duties as an Environmental Health Specialist III, required supervision, budget and policy development and all administrative functions for a 10-15 member technical staff working in solid and hazardous waste. During the period as the program supervisor and section manager, I oversaw day-to-day operations of the vector control program as it was phasing out of the Health Department.

5. From 1985 through 1987, I was employed by the Thurston County Health Department as an Environmental Health Specialist working on hazardous waste, food inspections and some work foodborne illness investigations.

6. I have a Bachelor of Science in Public Health (Environmental Health) from the University of Washington.

7. During my employment with the TPCHD, I was registered as a Registered Environmental Health Specialist with the National Environmental Health Association.

8. As part of my educational background and my employment as an environmental health specialist and with the Solid Waste Utility, I have read and analyzed numerous studies, reports, investigations, surveys, articles, professional journals, periodicals, and trade magazines related to public health and sanitation, and in particular homelessness and homeless encampments. Additionally, I have either personally witnessed, or spoken with others who have witnessed, the public health impacts related to homelessness and homeless encampments.

9. The Solid Waste Utility operates under authority of Chapter 12.09 of the Tacoma Municipal Code as a public utility responsible for the collection and disposal of solid waste on an exclusive and universal basis throughout the City. The Solid Waste utility collects, manages and handles solid waste in the City originating from residential, commercial, agricultural, and industrial operations and other sources with the city, in order to prevent, land, air and water pollution, fly and rodent infestation, fire hazards, damage to recreational values, and damage to the environment.

10. The Solid Waste Utility has responsibility for oversight of the removal of solid and other waste from numerous homeless encampments found throughout the City of Tacoma on City owned properties.

11. The proper handling of solid waste is a key public service whose main purpose is to protect public health.

12. Based upon my knowledge, experience and education as described above, I am familiar with public health issues related to homelessness in the City of Tacoma and greater Tacoma area, and the public health conditions associated with persons living in unsheltered environments. The following is a description and summary of some of the environmental health issues related to homeless encampments.

13. Public Health is wide ranging field with several components to the issue. Numerous studies conclude that homeless encampments negatively affect the health of the inhabitants and have the potential to affect the public health of the community as well. The scope of the impact to the surrounding community depends on a number of factors, including the number of encampment inhabitants, location, practices within the encampment and availability of services or facilities nearby.

14. Public health issues related to encampments come in many forms, both internal and external to the homeless encampments. Violence, the impacts to the health care and emergency medical systems, substance abuse issues and communicable diseases are all very valid public health issues related to homeless encampments.

15. This summary focuses on two of the major environmental health aspects of homeless encampments. Environmental health issues typically focus on what are historically called sanitation issues. In this case, encampments could have a significant environmental health impact on both encampment inhabitants and the community.

16. Among the major environmental health issues found in homeless encampments include:

- Human waste and sewage disposal
- Solid waste disposal
- Disposal of used syringes and needles related to IV drug use
- Improper water
- Food storage and preparation
- Access to handwashing and personal hygiene

17. Of the environmental health issues listed above, the improper management of human waste/sewage and solid waste may have the highest potential for community health impacts. The factors listed earlier including number of encampment inhabitants, location, practices within the encampment and availability of services or facilities nearby have a significant role in the scope of potential public health issues.

18. Historical studies and research by the World Health Organization have stated that, "At any given time close to half of the urban populations of Africa, Asia, and Latin America have a disease associated with poor sanitation, hygiene, and water (WHO)".

19. Many health experts emphatically state that sanitation, mostly related to proper disposal of human waste, and clean water are still responsible for a majority of the health improvements developed countries enjoy versus the less developed countries.

20. The homeless encampments that have been observed in the Tacoma area do not have on-site facilities for proper disposal of human excreta. A variety of means is being used by the occupants to handle such wastes, including makeshift latrines, buckets, or direct urination or defecation on the ground. Handwashing is minimal and piles of solid wastes often contain significant amounts of containers with human excreta. Those solid wastes are uncontained and exposed to the environment. Many of these encampment sites have populations of over 50 to 100 inhabitants. The potential for disease transmission within and external to the encampment increases with the increasing number of occupants.

21. While there would be much concern with the epidemic big name diseases like Cholera, a much more likely aspect of the public health concern with sewage is with endemic illness. Endemic illness is already present in the community, and would include illness such as Hepatitis A, Rotaviruses and a host of other parasitic, bacterial and viral pathogens. Based on the documented poor health conditions of homeless persons and sheer numbers of occupants of the camps, it is very likely that the endemic

illness is present in the encampment populations at this time. Improper disposal of sewage in this case significantly increases the exposure to the pathogens and the danger to public health.

22. Poor handwashing and poor food handling exacerbate public health impacts. The lack of proper food storage increases the risk of foodborne illness, and many forms of foodborne illness are easily transmitted through sewage.

23. Environmental considerations are also significant. Runoff contaminated by human wastes could find its way into rivers and waterbodies used for recreation or private harvesting of shellfish.

24. The homeless encampments observed in the Tacoma area do not have on site systems for proper collection, storage or disposal of solid wastes. For most homeless encampments observed, significant piles of solid waste can be found at the sites. These piles can include many of the same materials found in household garbage, including containers with human waste.

25. Solid waste that is not properly disposed of is a serious health hazard leading to the spread of infectious diseases. Improper disposal or storage of solid wastes breeds and attracts disease vectors such as flies, rats, and other creatures that in turn spread disease. The solid wastes found in homeless encampments can pose a higher risk because of the presence of semi-contained human waste that can be found in higher quantities than residential solid waste.

26. Environmental degradation is also possible from improper disposal of solid waste. Surface water contamination due to runoff from the garbage is possible, and this concern is heightened when an encampment is near a water body such as a stream or

river. Litter blown away from the disposal site is a daily occurrence, and sometimes leads to secondary issues such as blocking storm drains or harming wildlife.

27. For some encampments, the Solid Waste Utility has provided large containers on the border of the encampment for the occupants to place solid waste. While these solid waste containers are heavily used, a large percentage of solid waste remains at most of the larger sites.

28. The number and size of the homeless encampments found in the City of Tacoma have grown significantly over the last two years.

29. There are now multiple encampments that have the potential to affect public health in the community. As the practice to remove an encampment is performed, the occupants will generally move to another uncontrolled site. This increases the area and potential for community exposure to the impacts of homeless encampments. Because the population and number of camps continues to increase, the potential for impacts to public health warrant a dramatically larger effort to reduce the homeless problem in general and the public health impacts of the encampments specifically.

30. Solid Waste Utility services being provided at homeless encampments in Tacoma has been increasing because of this increase in the number of homeless encampment sites. The Solid Waste Utility is conducting a larger number of cleanups (solid and other waste collection and removal) of those sites.

31. In 2016, the Solid Waste Utility's cleanup contractor was sent out to clean up homeless encampments 40 times. In 2017, the pace for cleanups has been nearly 50% higher based on the first four months of the year. Because more homeless

encampments have been identified at this time, it is possible that that the cleanups performed in 2017 will be double the total performed in 2016.

32. Based on observations of the conditions found in the homeless encampments in Tacoma, there are significant health hazards related to sewage and solid waste associated with the larger encampments. As the encampments grow in size and duration of time at the site, the risk to both the inhabitants and the community grows as well.

33. The continuing and increasing presence of homeless encampments in the City of Tacoma and the greater Tacoma area that do not have adequate and proper on-site health and sanitation services and practices that will prevent the spread of disease and the contamination of the environment poses a significant, direct and immediate threat to the health of the inhabitants and poses a real and emergent threat to the health of the surrounding community.

Dated this 8th day of May, 2017 in Tacoma, Washington.



Gary Kato,
Division Manager
Solid Waste Division