



February 28, 2013

Jean Godden
Council Member
City of Seattle
600 4th Avenue, 2nd Floor
Seattle, WA 98124

Dear Council Member Godden;

The West Seattle Helpline is a social service agency that offers emergency assistance for working families in need throughout West Seattle for more than twenty years. In 2013, we will raise more than \$20,000 to assist West Seattle families facing emergencies with utility bills. In addition, the West Seattle Helpline also offers rental assistance to prevent evictions, bus tickets, and clothing at our clothing bank for neighbors in need. In 2012, we received applicants from more than 820 individuals regarding utility assistance. Approximately 270 met our agency's mission, yet we were only able to provide support to 102 applicants.

We've served the community through thick and thin economic times, and we recognize that there will always be a role for private, non-profit organizations such as the West Seattle Helpline. However, very few organizations provide private assistance for Seattle Public Utilities, yet we can only provide funds to less than half of the applicants' needs. This is even more disheartening when we know that more than 80% of West Seattle Helpline applicants facing a water shut off have minor children in the home. We prioritize assisting these families because we believe that all children should have access to clean water.

On a regular basis, our volunteers hear how families and children are impacted when Seattle Public Utilities shut off water service. We hear stories about families struggling to provide sanitary conditions for children after a water shut off. Clients resort to using water-filled buckets borrowed from neighbors' apartments to flush toilets. Parents can't properly wash their hands after changing diapers, provide drinking water, or bath their children without accessible water.

Our clients are the working poor, those individuals struggling to make ends meet while working hard and raising families. Often, they seek our help due to a hardship created by an emergency situation beyond their control, such as an unexpected layoff, a medical condition, or a death in the family. As advocates for these families, the West Seattle Helpline supports any efforts taken to reduce water shutoffs for families with children in the home.

The West Seattle Helpline appreciates the time and energy you are dedicating to help these families meet their basic needs. Please let us know how we can further support your work providing additional emergency assistance for families with children in the home.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Tara Luckie".

Tara Luckie
West Seattle Helpline Executive Director
tara@wshelpline.org