Resolution in Support of City of Bellingham Initiative No. 2021-01.

**WHEREAS**, rental demand continues to grow in Bellingham, but wages have not kept pace with housing costs. According to the American Community Survey, 57% of renting households in Bellingham are cost-burdened (spending more than 30% of household income on housing) with 30% being severely cost-burdened (spending more than 50% of household income on housing).

**WHEREAS**, low-income households bear the brunt of high housing costs; of those households making 50% or less of the median income in Whatcom County, 81% are either cost burdened or severely cost burdened.

**WHEREAS**, renters disproportionately bear the burden of low incomes and high housing costs. Almost 55% of rental households are cost-burdened or severely cost-burdened, as compared to 28% of homeowners. A third of Bellingham renters are severely cost-burdened.

**WHEREAS**, the current rental vacancy rate in Bellingham is among the lowest in the nation. Estimates for the vacancy rate in Fall 2020 varied from .2% to just over 2%, both of which are far below the 5-7% vacancy rate that the City of Bellingham defines as healthy.

**WHEREAS**, low vacancy rates make it difficult for renters to find decent, safe, affordable housing.

**WHEREAS**, moving among rentals often requires large sums of money, including first and last month's rent, deposits, moving expenses, and utility deposits for a new residence.

**WHEREAS**, forced relocation is not merely expensive but puts renters under economic stress that increases their risk of becoming homeless.

**WHEREAS,** City of Bellingham Initiative No. 2021-01 would:

* require landlords to provide written notice 90 days before terminating a rental agreement without cause or increasing rent by more than 5% in a rolling 12-month period;
* require landlords to pay rental relocation assistance equal to three months of the current fair market rent in the Bellingham area when terminating a rental agreement without cause or increasing rent more than 8%, if requested by tenant, with limited exceptions; and
* authorize private party civil enforcement actions.

**THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED THAT** the Whatcom County Democrats support placing City of Bellingham Initiative No. 2021-01 on the ballot;

**THEREFORE, BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED THAT** upon adoption of this resolution, Whatcom Democrats will publicize this proposed initiative;

**THEREFORE, BE IT FINALLY RESOLVED THAT** the Whatcom County Democrats will use its mailing list and online presence to mobilize voters and collect signatures.