

1 THE HONORABLE JUDGE JOHN C. COUGHENOUR

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8 UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
9 WESTERN DISTRICT OF WASHINGTON
10 AT SEATTLE

11 CHONG and MARILYN YIM, KELLY LYLES,
12 EILEEN, LLC, and RENTAL HOUSING
13 ASSOCIATION OF WASHINGTON,

14 Plaintiffs,

15 vs.

16 THE CITY OF SEATTLE, a Washington
17 Municipal Corporation,

18 Defendant.

No. 2:18-cv-00736-JCC

PIONEER HUMAN SERVICES AND THE
TENANTS UNION OF WASHINGTON'S
MOTION TO INTERVENE

NOTE ON MOTION CALENDAR:
August 17, 2018

Oral Argument Requested

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MOTION TO INTERVENE
No. 2:18-cv-00736-JCC

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1 Washington of residential reentry services for people released from federal prison. *Id.* ¶ 3. A
2 significant and disproportionate number of the people whom Pioneer serves are people of color.
3 *Id.* ¶ 4. Besides providing direct services, Pioneer advocates for legal and policy changes
4 promoting the rights of people reentering the community. *Id.* ¶ 3. One of Pioneer’s advocacy
5 priorities is supporting efforts to increase housing availability for people with criminal records.
6 *Id.* Pioneer also recognizes the need for anti-discrimination laws that recognize racial bias in the
7 criminal justice system and the resulting housing discrimination. *Id.* ¶ 4.

8 Pioneer actively participates in the Fair and Accessible Renting for Everyone coalition
9 (FARE), a group of community members and organizations whose efforts resulted in passage of
10 the Ordinance. Young Decl. ¶ 5. Central to FARE’s advocacy are beliefs that: housing is an
11 essential right for everyone, regardless of an individual’s criminal record; criminal records,
12 which disproportionately impact communities of color, remain an unnecessary barrier to rental
13 housing; and fair and effective housing laws like the Ordinance will help move Seattle beyond its
14 history of segregation and discrimination. *Id.*² Invalidation of the Ordinance would deny the
15 people Pioneer serves significant opportunities to find housing in Seattle and would require
16 Pioneer to allocate more time and resources advocating for these individuals. Young Decl. ¶ 6.

17 **B. Tenants Union of Washington**

18 TU is a Washington nonprofit organization that has engaged in tenant education,
19 outreach, organizing, and advocacy since 1977. Lavatai Decl. ¶ 2. TU works to create
20 improvements in tenants’ living conditions and challenge and transform unjust housing policies

21 _____
22 ² FARE is independent of the Mayor’s Fair Chance Housing Committee, which was convened to address rental housing discrimination, *see* Gunning Decl., Ex. 3, at 5, for several reasons, including the need to amplify the voices of individuals personally affected by this issue. *See* Young Decl. ¶ 5; Lavatai Decl. ¶ 6.

1 and practices. *Id.* It is a membership organization who believes that tenants themselves must be
2 the leaders of efforts to transform housing conditions. *Id.* Members pay dues on a sliding scale
3 and help shape the direction of TU's work. *Id.*

4 In addition to its education and outreach work, TU and its members have taken a
5 leadership role on legislative advocacy supporting tenants' rights legislation, including advocacy
6 for anti-discrimination laws limiting landlords' use of criminal records in rental decisions. *Id.*
7 ¶¶ 4-5. TU's work on this issue is grounded in the recognition that Seattle residents with arrest or
8 conviction records are disproportionately people of color and that laws that recognize racial bias
9 in the criminal justice system can prevent the housing discrimination that bias creates. *Id.* TU's
10 advocacy is informed by its multiracial and multicultural leadership and membership and its
11 staff's lived experience. *Id.* Most tenants TU serves are very low income, people of color,
12 women, and/or immigrants or refugees. *Id.* TU, like Pioneer, actively participates in FARE and
13 was a key player in the Ordinance's passage. *Id.* ¶ 6-7. Invalidation of the Ordinance would deny
14 TU members with criminal records and others who rely on TU's advocacy significant
15 opportunities to find housing in Seattle and would require TU to allocate more time and
16 resources advocating for them. *Id.* ¶ 7.

17 III. FACTUAL BACKGROUND

18 A. Seattle Has a Long History of Race Discrimination in Housing.

19 Seattle has a shameful history of race discrimination in housing. Racially restrictive
20 covenants and entrenched redlining practices resulted in a city with few neighborhoods where
21 people of color could find housing. Gunning Decl., Ex. 1. The City did not pass a law prohibiting
22 race discrimination in housing until 1968. Gunning Decl., Ex. 2. Before 1968, the City Council

1 rejected community groups’ multiple requests for a fair housing ordinance. *Id.* Opponents
2 claimed fair housing laws “would infringe on constitutional property rights, were dictatorial,
3 confiscatory, and would lead to evasion and disrespect for the law.” *Id.* (citing the *Seattle Times*,
4 1961). When an ordinance was placed on the ballot in 1964, it was overwhelmingly rejected,
5 with opponents claiming it would violate their property and privacy rights. *Id.*

6 Fair housing laws arise from a fundamental principle: individuals have privacy rights, but
7 “[w]here one opens one’s home to the public by engaging in the rental of rooms therein for
8 monetary gain, one must be deemed to have voluntarily subordinated personal privacy rights to
9 those state interests which can be shown to be compelling.” *Voris v. Wash. State Human Rights*
10 *Comm’n*, 41 Wn. App. 283, 290-91, 704 P.2d 632, 636 (1985) (rejecting argument of landlord
11 who refused to rent room to a black person that “her right to choose the people with whom she
12 will share her home outweighs the State’s interest in preventing discrimination”). The 1968
13 ordinance was the first step in addressing historic bias limiting access to housing for
14 communities of color; over 40 years later, Pioneer and TU continued that fight.

15 **B. The Fair Chance Housing Ordinance.**

16 The City Council unanimously voted to adopt the Ordinance on August 14, 2017.
17 Gunning Ex. 3 at 29. It was signed into law by the mayor on August 23, 2017, and went into
18 effect on February 18, 2018. *Id.* The law was developed in response to community concerns
19 about barriers people with criminal backgrounds faced when attempting to secure rental housing,
20 and in collaboration with stakeholders, including renters and their advocates. *See id.* at 4.

21 The Ordinance’s goals include reducing race discrimination and recidivism, and
22 promoting reintegration through access to housing. *Id.* It seeks to achieve these goals in several

1 ways. It prohibits landlords from automatically rejecting tenants because of their arrest record,
2 conviction record, or criminal history. SMC § 14.09.025(A)(1). It also forbids housing providers
3 from asking about or “requir[ing] the disclosure of” their arrest record, conviction record, or
4 criminal history. SMC § 14.09.025(A)(2). And, it bars landlords from carrying out any “adverse
5 action” based on nearly all criminal history, except for certain sex offenses. SMC
6 § 14.09.025(2)-(5). Adverse actions including “[d]enying tenancy,” falsely “[r]epresenting
7 that...[the] property is not available,” “[t]erminating a lease,” and “refusing to add a household
8 member to any existing lease.” SMC § 14.09.010 (defining “adverse action”). The Ordinance is
9 enforced by the Seattle Office for Civil Rights. SMC §§ 14.09.035(B)-(C), .045, .060.

10 **C. Procedural History.**

11 On May 1, 2018, Plaintiffs filed this lawsuit in King County Superior Court seeking
12 invalidation of the Ordinance and an injunction prohibiting its enforcement. Dkt. 1-1. The City
13 removed the case and answered the complaint. Dkt. 1, Dkt. 8. On July 20, 2018, the Court
14 granted the parties’ stipulated motion in which they agreed this case can be resolved through
15 summary judgment motions based on an agreed record and set briefing deadlines. Dkt. 10.

16 **IV. ARGUMENT**

17 Rule 24 allows intervention both as a matter of right and permissively. The Ninth Circuit
18 has a strong preference for liberal evaluation of the requirements for granting intervention. *See*
19 *Forest Conservation Council v. U.S. Forest Serv.*, 66 F.3d 1489, 1496 n.8 (9th Cir. 1995)
20 (citation omitted), *abrogated on other grounds by Wilderness Soc’y v. United States Forest*
21 *Serv.*, 630 F.3d 1172 (9th Cir. 2011) (a “liberal policy in favor of intervention serves both
22 efficient resolution of issues and broadened access to the courts”). The court must accept as true

1 all “nonconclusory allegations” in the motion to intervene, accompanying pleading in
2 intervention, and supporting declarations, “absent sham, frivolity or other objections.” *Sw. Ctr.*
3 *for Biological Diversity v. Berg*, 268 F.3d 810, 819-20 (9th Cir. 2001). As shown below, Pioneer
4 and TU satisfy all requirements for intervention by right, as well as for permissive intervention.

5 **A. The Court Should Grant Pioneer and TU Intervention as of Right.**

6 “[G]uided primarily by practical considerations,” courts broadly construe four criteria
7 when evaluating a Rule 24(a) motion to intervene by right: (1) the motion is timely; (2) the
8 proposed intervenor “has a significant protectable interest relating to the property...which is the
9 subject of the action;” (3) “the disposition of the action may, as a practical matter impair or
10 impede [the proposed intervenor’s] ability to protect its interest;” and (4) “the existing parties
11 may not adequately represent the applicant’s interest.” *Citizens for Balanced Use v. Montana*
12 *Wilderness Ass’n*, 647 F.3d 893, 897 (9th Cir. 2011) (internal citation and marks omitted).

13 **1. This motion to intervene is timely.**

14 Courts consider three factors when exercising discretion to determine whether a motion
15 to intervene is timely: (1) the stage of the proceeding; (2) prejudice to existing parties; and (3)
16 “the reason for and length of the delay” in moving to intervene. *United States ex rel. McGough v.*
17 *Covington Techs. Co.*, 967 F.2d 1391, 1394 (9th Cir. 1992). Here, Pioneer and TU have moved
18 to intervene at an early stage of this litigation; thus, delay is not at issue. The Complaint was
19 filed less than four months ago, *see* Dkt. 1-1, and there have been no rulings on substantive
20 issues. *See Idaho Farm Bureau Fed’n v. Babbitt*, 58 F.3d 1392, 1397 (9th Cir. 1995) (motion to
21 intervene filed four months after complaint was timely).

22 The only “prejudice” relevant to timeliness “is that which flows from a prospective

1 intervenor’s failure to intervene after he knew, or reasonably should have known, that his
2 interests were not being adequately represented[.]” *Smith v. L.A. United Sch. Dist.*, 830 F.3d 843,
3 857 (9th Cir. 2016). “[T]he fact that including another party in the case might make resolution
4 more difficult” is irrelevant when assessing timeliness of a motion to intervene. *Id.* (citation and
5 marks omitted). Given the early stage of this case, intervention will not prejudice the parties. A
6 scheduling order is in place for summary judgment motions, to be based on an agreed record. If
7 intervention is granted, Pioneer and TU will confer with the parties about an amended briefing
8 schedule and adding materials to the record. Gunning Decl. ¶ 8.

9 **2. Pioneer and TU have significant protectable interests.**

10 A proposed intervenor has a “significant protectable interest” in an action when “the
11 injunctive relief sought by plaintiff will have direct, immediate, and harmful effects upon [the
12 proposed intervenor’s] legally protectable interests.” *Sw. Ctr. for Biological Diversity*, 268 F.3d
13 at 818. Courts have routinely granted a law’s intended beneficiaries, and those who represent and
14 advocate their interests, leave to intervene in an action challenging the law. *See, e.g., County of*
15 *Fresno v. Andrus*, 622 F.2d 436, 438 (9th Cir. 1980) (finding proposed intervenor group had an
16 interest in litigation because its members were persons Congress intended to benefit by passage
17 of a statute). Indeed, “[a] public interest group is entitled as a matter of right to intervene in an
18 action challenging the legality of a measure it has supported.” *Idaho Farm Bureau Fed’n*, 58
19 F.3d at 1397 (intervention granted to advocacy groups who were active in process leading to
20 challenged agency action); *Sagebrush Rebellion, Inc. v. Watt*, 713 F.2d 525, 527-28 (9th Cir.
21 1983) (intervenors had protected interest in defending creation of conservation area they helped
22 create); *State of Idaho v. Freeman*, 625 F.2d 886, 887 (9th Cir. 1980) (allowing National

1 Organization for Women (NOW) to intervene in case challenging validity of ratification
2 procedures of Equal Rights Amendment, which it had actively supported); *Michigan State AFL-*
3 *CIO v. Miller*, 103 F.3d 1240, 1245-1247 (6th Cir. 1997) (relying on Ninth Circuit’s broader rule
4 to find proposed public interest group intervenor had “substantial legal interest” in case because
5 it was a “vital participant in the political process” leading to enactment of challenged law).

6 The Ordinance directly and substantially benefits people Pioneer and TU serve and both
7 are public interest organizations who were deeply involved in efforts to pass the Ordinance.
8 Plaintiffs seek relief that would destroy the protections Pioneer and TU have always fought for.

9 **3. Pioneer and TU’s ability to protect their interests may be impaired by the**
10 **disposition of this action.**

11 Once the court finds a significant protectable interest, it should have “little difficulty
12 concluding that the disposition of th[e] case may, as a practical matter, affect” the proposed
13 intervenor. *See Citizens for Balanced Use*, 647 F.3d at 898; *see also* Fed. R. Civ. P. 24 advisory
14 committee note (“[i]f an absentee would be substantially affected in a practical sense by the
15 determination made in an action, he should, as a general rule, be entitled to intervene....”). Here,
16 the “impairment” requirement is easily satisfied. If Plaintiffs prevail, Pioneer and TU and the
17 people they serve will be stripped of vital protections. And, if they are denied intervention, they
18 “will have no legal means to challenge th[e] injunction” Plaintiffs seek. *See Forest Conservation*
19 *Council*, 66 F.3d at 1498; *see also United States v. Oregon*, 839 F.2d 635, 639 (9th Cir. 1988)
20 (“recognizing practical limitations on the ability of intervention applicants to protect interests in
21 the subject of the litigation after court-ordered equitable remedies are in place”).

21 **4. The City does not adequately represent Pioneer and TU’s interests.**

22 The “burden of showing inadequacy of representation is minimal and may be satisfied if

1 the applicant can demonstrate that representation of its interests may be inadequate.” *Citizens for*
2 *Balanced Use*, 647 F.3d at 898 (citations and marks omitted). The Ninth Circuit uses a three-part
3 test for addressing “inadequacy”: “(1) whether the interest of a present party is such that it will
4 undoubtedly make all of a proposed intervenor’s arguments; (2) whether the present party is
5 capable and willing to make such arguments; and (3) whether a proposed intervenor would offer
6 any necessary elements to the proceeding that other parties would neglect.” *Id.* (citation and
7 marks omitted). The “most important factor,” however, is “how the interest compares with the
8 interests of existing parties.” *Id.* (citation and marks omitted). There is “an assumption of
9 adequacy” if the “government is acting on behalf of a constituency that it represents,” but “the
10 government’s representation of the public interest may not be identical to the individual
11 parochial interest of a particular group just because both entities occupy the same posture in the
12 litigation.” *Id.* at 898-99 (citation and marks omitted). Thus, even when the government is
13 defending a law, if the proposed intervenor’s interests are not identical this distinction is
14 sufficient to merit granting intervention. *See Forest Conservation Council*, 66 F.3d at 1499.

15 Here, Pioneer and TU have made a threshold showing that the City does not adequately
16 represent their interests. First, the City’s obligation to defend the Ordinance is on behalf of *all*
17 Seattle residents, not just people with criminal records. Indeed, the Ordinance as enacted was
18 prompted in significant part by the advocacy of Pioneer, TU, and others who successfully
19 lobbied over several years for passage of the Ordinance. Even when the Ordinance was close to
20 passage, Pioneer, TU, and other FARE members worked to make it even stronger. Lavatai Decl.
21 ¶ 6; Young Decl. ¶ 5. The Mayor’s original bill allowed the use of criminal background checks
22 by landlords for convictions within the previous two years. *Id.*; Gunning Decl., Ex. 4. But FARE

1 and other advocates argued that a two-year “lookback period” would be discriminatory and
2 wrong if no evidence exists to support the use of criminal background checks in tenant
3 screening.. Lavatai Decl. ¶ 6; Young Decl. ¶ 5. As a result, the bill was amended to prohibit the
4 use of criminal records in tenant screening entirely. *Id.*; Gunning Decl., Ex. 3. Under such
5 circumstances, where the City adopted amendments in response to this advocacy, inadequacy of
6 representation is patent. *Cf. Citizens for Balanced Use*, 647 F.3d at 900.

7 Second, “willingness to suggest a limiting construction in defense of a statute is an
8 important consideration in determining whether the government will adequately represent its
9 constituents’ interests.” *California ex rel. Lockyer v. United States*, 450 F.3d 436, 444 (9th Cir.
10 2006). Here, there is a risk the City may view the Ordinance’s scope differently than Pioneer and
11 TU. For example, it appears the Seattle Housing Authority (SHA) may take the position that it
12 need not comply with the Ordinance; the Mayor declared a moratorium with respect to
13 enforcement of the Ordinance as to SHA. Gunning Decl., Exs. 5, 6. It is unclear if the City
14 believes public housing providers are exempt.³ Pioneer and TU oppose a reading of the
15 Ordinance that would exempt public housing providers.

16 Finally, Pioneer and TU can provide the Court with an on-the-ground perspective on the
17 effects of housing discrimination related to criminal records, including the disparate impact
18 criminal record screening has on communities of color. The City does not have the same stake in
19 this matter as Pioneer and TU – organizations representing the interests of, and advocating for,

20
21 ³ The City’s Answer contributes to this ambiguity. *Compare* Complaint (Dkt. 1-1) ¶ 15 (“the City sought only to
22 regulate private rental housing”) *with* Answer (Dkt. 8) ¶ 15 (“[t]o the extent that paragraph 15 of the Complaint
consists of characterizations of the recitals of Ordinance 125393 or documents cited in those recitals, the recitals and
documents speak for themselves, and the City DENIES those characterizations. To the extent that paragraph 15
contains allegations within the meaning of Fed. R. Civ. P. 8(b)(1)(B), the City DENIES those allegations”).

1 people who experience discrimination in housing due to their criminal records. Part of this
2 perspective is challenging Plaintiffs' claims that studies in the legislative record supporting the
3 Ordinance include statements "unsupported by fact or law," or "omit key facts[.]" Complaint
4 (Dkt. 1-1) ¶¶ 58-60. The City responds that the studies "speak for themselves," Answer (Dkt. 8)
5 ¶¶ 58-61, but by agreeing to a stipulated record, the City cannot submit expert opinions regarding
6 the studies. If intervention is granted, Pioneer and TU will request permission to submit expert
7 opinions and other relevant information with summary judgment briefing, to meaningfully
8 challenge Plaintiffs' arguments. Gunning Decl. ¶ 8.

9 **B. In the Alternative, Pioneer and TU Should Be Granted Permissive Intervention.**

10 Even if the Court finds intervention as of right is unwarranted, permissive intervention is
11 appropriate. "Unlike [R]ule 24(a), a 'significant protectable interest' is not required by Rule
12 24(b) for intervention; all that is necessary for permissive intervention is that intervenor's claim
13 or defense and the main action have a question of law or fact in common." *Kootenai Tribe of*
14 *Idaho v. Veneman*, 313 F.3d 1094, 1108 (9th Cir. 2002). Once this standard is met, permissive
15 intervention is within the court's discretion, after considering whether intervention will unduly
16 delay the case or unfairly prejudice the existing parties. Fed. R. Civ. P. 24(b)(3).

17 Here, the Court should exercise its discretion to permit Pioneer and TU to intervene.
18 Their defense of the Ordinance presents common questions of law and fact with the City's
19 defense and they only seek to defend the Ordinance against Plaintiffs' constitutional challenge.
20 Further, Pioneer and TU seek to ensure that the importance of the Ordinance is considered from
21 the perspective of those who will benefit from it. This motion is timely and the significance of
22 Pioneer and TU's interests outweighs any marginal burden that will be caused by intervention.

1 See *United States v. City of Los Angeles*, 288 F.3d 391, 404-05 (9th Cir. 2002) (noting that “the
2 idea of ‘streamlining’ the litigation...should not be accomplished at the risk of marginalizing
3 those...who have some of the strongest interests in the outcome”).

4 Courts have granted permissive intervention to groups advocating for tenants’ interests in
5 cases where landlords have challenged tenant-protective ordinances and government practices.
6 See, e.g., *Miller v. Silbermann*, 827 F. Supp. 663, 673-74 (S.D.N.Y. 1993) (granting permissive
7 intervention to tenant advocates in landlord’s challenge of housing court practices); *Chicago Bd.*
8 *of Realtors v. City of Chicago*, 673 F. Supp. 224, 228 (N.D. Ill. 1986), *aff’d*, 819 F.2d 732 (7th
9 Cir. 1987) (granting permissive intervention to “representatives of tenants’ interests” in
10 constitutional challenge to landlord-tenant ordinance). As the court explained in *Miller*, where
11 plaintiffs representing landlords’ interests sued the New York City housing court “claim[ing] that
12 as a result of the alleged systemic bias of the Housing Court against owners, disputes are often
13 unsettled unfairly in favor of tenants[,]” “considerations of fairness strongly weigh in favor of
14 permissive intervention as the Tenants, in light of their knowledge and concern, will greatly
15 contribute to the Court’s understanding of this case.” 827 F. Supp. at 666, 674.

16 V. CONCLUSION

17 The Ordinance was birthed by people on whose behalf it was enacted and by the
18 advocacy of organizations like Pioneer and TU who help amplify their voices. RHA will have its
19 day in court to represent landlords’ interests. As a matter of fundamental fairness, organizations
20 representing the Ordinance’s intended beneficiaries should also have the opportunity to be heard.
21 Pioneer and TU respectfully request the Court grant their motion to intervene.

22 Respectfully submitted this 2nd day of August, 2018.

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1 **Certificate of Service**

2 I hereby certify that I electronically filed the foregoing document, Pioneer Human
3 Services and the Tenants Union of Washington’s Motion to Intervene, with the Clerk of the
4 Court using the CM/ECF system, which will send notification of such filing to the following
5 parties:

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14 DATED August 2, 2018 at Seattle, Washington.

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