

From: [Yasmin Ibarra](#)
To: [Council Clerk – Testimony](#)
Subject: Testimony for agenda item #250 and #251
Date: Wednesday, April 1, 2020 8:25:10 AM
Attachments: [Yasmin Ibarra TESTIMONY - City leases in non-union buildings - 03.30.20.pdf](#)

Hello,

Please see the attached testimony regarding the City's agenda items #250 and 251, lease renewals.

Yasmin Ibarra (She/Hers)

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Testimony to the Portland City Council
Provided by Yasmin Ibarra
Political Organizer, SEIU Local 49

Re: City leases and responsible contracting, Agenda Item 250 and 251

April 1, 2020

Good Morning Mayor Wheeler and Commissioners,

My name is Yasmin Ibarra and I am the Political Organizer for the Service Employees International Union, Local 49. SEIU Local 49 is a union of more than 15,000 healthcare and property service workers, including nearly 4,000 janitors and security officers in the Portland metro area. These workers are black, brown, and white, of many ethnicities, countries of origin, religion, and gender identities, united by pride in the work they do to keep our communities clean and secure.

I am reaching out today to express concern regarding the City's proposed lease extensions in two downtown buildings, the Spalding Building and Harrison Square. We want to bring to your attention that the ownership and property management of those buildings use non-union subcontracted janitorial services, and make sure that you are aware of the impact that this has on building service industries throughout the region.

When the City chooses to lease space in buildings cleaned and secured by union janitors and security officers, the City is ensuring that *all* jobs created by the City's investment of taxpayer dollars are *good* jobs. Responsible union contractors create jobs that pay fair wages, provide workers with a voice on the job, and prioritize health and safety measures— and they add clear value to the City's investment by ensuring high quality service, low workplace turnover, workforce stability, and greater retention of a highly skilled workforce.

In contrast, leasing space in buildings cleaned and secured by low-cost contractors who offer lower wages and benefits can put taxpayers' investment at risk by exposing City offices to inconsistent cleaning quality and diminished safety and security due to higher rates of turnover. What's worse, leasing space in non-union buildings sends a message to the region's commercial building owners and property managers and undermines the City's commitment to responsible contracting and good jobs.

Especially now as Portland navigates the emerging impacts of COVID-19 against the existing backdrop of the City's growing income inequality, the City has an opportunity to use creative mechanisms to protect and promote social, racial, and economic justice. When looking to lease commercial office space, the City could meet its needs while simultaneously making a profound impact on the lives of thousands of low wage property service workers by committing to only considering space in buildings that use responsible contractors. The majority of commercial buildings in the Portland city center rely on union janitorial and security contractors for their building services, providing a wide variety of options for City offices.

We understand the City's present position of needing to extend the existing leases for the Portland Children's Levy and the Fire & Police Disability and Retirement Board. Accordingly, we ask that the City direct its procurement officers to request that as a condition of City tenancy the owners and property managers of the Spalding Building and Harrison Square put their janitorial contracts out to bid and commit to contracting with responsible contractors.

Thank you.
Yasmin Ibarra
Service Employees International Union, Local 49