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How can our long-standing institutions adapt to meet the unique challenges we are all presented with in the twenty-first century? Faced with a growing climate crisis, ongoing struggles for criminal justice reform, an ailing and underfunded public education system, and a myriad of other societal pressures, how can one live a life in service of solving these issues? This singular question has been a driving force for me throughout my personal, academic and professional life. Finding my answer to this question has led me to many different roles, both through my professional experiences in public schools and state departments, and through my volunteer experiences working with low income tenants and community members seeking meaningful policy reform. My passion for policy and public service, and my skill set gained through my academic, volunteer, and public sector work have led me to seek a Masters in Public Administration from The Evergreen State College.

I can trace my passion for public service back to high school, and it is the reason I decided to continue on to college. Coming from a working class background and a single parent household, school was something I held dear from an early age. The connection made with my teachers and other school staff, with coaches, with after-school activity volunteers, meant the world to me. School was somewhere safe, where my favorite activities like reading and math were encouraged, and where I learned to love to learn. The people I looked up to the most in my life were all people who dedicated their lives to others through teaching, and I wanted to be like them.

During college I became involved in several community organizations seeking social justice. Through my involvement in the Tacoma chapter of the Democratic Socialists of

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America, I began learning more about the issues facing people all over the city and around the state. While many issues were present, a prevailing theme throughout Tacoma was housing insecurity.

In April 2018, the over one hundred residents of the Tiki Apartments in Tacoma were issued a twenty day eviction notice by the new owners of the property. The new owners were planning a complete renovation of the building, paired with a new rent over double the current rate. In the following days, members of Tacoma Democratic Socialists of America, the International Longshore and Warehouse Union Local 24, and the Washington Tenants Union met with tenants facing imminent displacement. Despite the imminent threat of eviction and having no other place to go facing these tenants, they wanted to stand up to their new landlord and advocate for a dignified process for leaving their homes. During the following weeks and months, the Tiki Tenants Organizing Committee (and later, when taken city wide, called the Tacoma Tenants Organizing Committee) brought the movement directly to the city council, fighting for more time for their eviction process and relocation funds to make it happen. Thanks to the countless hours of organizing and advocating, we were able to use Tacoma City Council to negotiate with the new landlord for these demands. During this time we also organized moving crews and trucks to help the many disabled, retired, and low income tenants relocate to their new apartments. When the movement for tenant's rights in Tacoma went from a single apartment building to city-wide, we were able to reach more tenants facing unfair evictions and advocate for their rights. After months of struggle, organizing, and advocacy, the Tacoma Tenants Organizing Committee won city wide reforms in the form of the new Landlord Fairness Code. This code embodied many of the demands we originally sought, increasing the notice for eviction and rent increase to 60 days, and providing financial assistance for tenants forced to leave their homes due to economic displacement. These months spent organizing alongside my neighbors from all over the city made me realize the change people can make when they are able to apply their lived experiences towards public policy. This experience sparked my interest in the

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effects public policy has on communities, and doubled my resolve to seek a career in public service.

My first experience working for the State of Washington arose during the Covid-19 lockdowns, during which many people were laid off from their jobs, including me. In search of a way to make myself feel useful during a crisis that had all of us locked in our own homes, I applied for a role with the Employment Security Department to intake new unemployment claims. During my time with the Employment Security Department, we had near constant adjustments and updates to policy as congressional funding sources for unemployment kept expiring and as the conditions in the world changed. This led me to developing a deep understanding of ESD Unemployment Insurance policy to keep up with the new changes, and allowed me to serve as a resource to the rest of my team.

In my current role with the Department of Natural Resources, I support the Forest Resilience Division through handling their procurement of goods and services. The Forest Resilience Division is a relatively new department, established in 2019 as the Department of Natural Resources took on a greater role in fighting back climate change statewide. In the Forest Resilience Division, it feels like I've found a true home for myself amongst individuals working together to fight the climate crisis. One of my reasons for seeking a Masters in Public Administration is to be able to continue supporting the important work of my division in fighting climate change and maintaining the natural landscapes of Washington.

Attaining a Masters in Public Administration from The Evergreen State College is a goal of mine because I want to spend my life in service of others, working towards a better future. With the many challenges facing our world, institutions such as Evergreen who focus on developing students to create social change are more important than ever.