



July, 9, 2020

To Mayor Durkan and Seattle Police Chief Best,

Healthy King County Coalition (HKCC) is a coalition of 40 plus community based organizations, health care providers, and residents working to create health equity by reducing health inequities in Seattle, King County and the State of Washington. We work to reduce health inequities through education, programming, and advocacy that highlights systemic barriers to health. One of the most prominent institutional inequalities connected to health and economic inequality is American policing.

American policing has its roots in institutional racism and the establishment of the American prison system which perpetuates economic exploitation, destabilizes communities of color, and erodes civic trust. Oversized police budgets take important resources away from education, housing, and food access which are all linked to health. Over-policing, disproportionate arrests, and unnecessary use of force occur routinely in Black, Brown, and poor neighborhoods. Inequitable enforcement of the law leads to disparities in arrests, trial convictions and sentencing. The lack of equity and representation in policing helps perpetuate the cycles of poverty, unemployment, inadequate housing and poor health. In order to address the damage done by decades of institutional racism in policing we support the adoption of the following actions:

- Work with the community to co-create alternatives to deal with nonviolent public safety issues including but not limited to employing non-armed Community Service/Public Safety officers to serve individuals experiencing mental health crisis, houselessness, and non violent disputes.
- Redirect police funding into Health and Human Services, Early Education, Office of Sustainability and Environment, and the Office of Civil Rights based on efforts to reduce health disparities based on community needs.
- Empower independent oversight boards to have the power to subpoena, investigate, discipline, and terminate the employment of officers found to be in violation of conduct rules.

- Revoke rules that allow law enforcement 48 hours to make a statement on a shooting and require reports by end of shift unless a health situation prevents an officer from making a report.
- Demilitarize the Seattle Police Department by ending the use and purchasing of military weaponry from the Federal Government. We further request that the Seattle Police Department return and or cease the use of any military weapons that they received from the Federal government.

During these times of social change this is an opportunity for you to listen to the recommendations of community voices by creating mechanisms of transparency and accountability for police. One of the best ways that you can help restore public trust is by investing in services and programs that address the current health and economic crisis by prioritizing public health and cessation of practices rooted in institutional racism.

Sincerely,

Health King County Governance Team

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