

October 27, 2023

City of Bonney
Lake

Dear Pierce County State Legislators,

City of Buckley

We are a bipartisan group of local leaders, unified in our resolve to advocate for ever improving public policy that fosters thriving communities. We are concerned about the alarming increases in crime rates and a growing lack of trust in the government's ability to protect residents and businesses. As leaders elected to serve our communities, we feel an increasing responsibility to help state lawmakers understand the reality of public safety in our cities and towns.

City of DuPont

Town of Eatonville

The state and local governments have a shared responsibility in keeping our communities safe. Part of the state's responsibility is to provide adequate resources and tools to local jurisdictions who are charged with providing essential public safety services. Recent changes to state laws necessitate additional state investment in public safety. The problems we now see with open drug use, increased stolen vehicles, increased property crime, increased eluding from police, and an overall disregard for public safety are not unique to our cities and towns. It is happening everywhere. **We ask that the State Legislature provide tools to address auto theft and property crime, including increased state funding to support regional enforcement and prosecution efforts.**

City of Fircrest

City of Gig Harbor

City of Lakewood

City of Milton

City of Orting

We are grateful that the State Legislature has recognized the importance of co-responder programs and therapeutic courts in preventing unnecessary engagement with the criminal justice system and connecting individuals to appropriate services. The current state budget allocates grant funding in both areas, but one time funding is not a sustainable solution. **Cities need ongoing, stable funding for both co-responder programs and therapeutic courts to be able to hire and retain staff.**

City of Pacific

City of Puyallup

In addition to these important investments, additional policy changes should be considered. Prior to legislative action in 2021, many cities and towns already had restrictive pursuit policies that weighed the community's safety with the underlying reason for the pursuit. People committing crimes were not necessarily aware of an agency's pursuit policy, and therefore appear to have been less likely to flee from police or use a vehicle in the commission of a crime. Unfortunately, offenders are currently using the state's vehicular pursuit laws to their advantage by using a vehicle in the commission of their criminal activity, an unintended consequence of a well-intentioned public safety goal. In light of the unintentional result from a statewide policy on pursuits, **we ask the State Legislature to make refinements to the pursuit policy to allow for the pursuit of stolen vehicles, given the number of criminals who use stolen vehicles to facilitate other crimes, and allow local jurisdictions to individually continue with their current policy against all pursuits if they consider that to be the best choice for their community.**

City of Roy

Town of Ruston

Town of
Steilacoom

City of Sumner

City of University
Place

Many of our communities have seen a surge in juvenile crime. The current law requires law enforcement to provide a juvenile with an attorney prior to questioning or obtaining consent to search personal property. The attorney can usurp parental direction and approval. This process is cumbersome, and results in police having to make arrest decisions without being able to get the juvenile's side of the story. **We ask the State Legislature to amend the law to allow for a parent or guardian to provide consent of a juvenile to be interviewed by law enforcement to include consent to search property.**

Finally, having an adequate number of police officers not only allows municipalities to effectively respond to crimes in progress, but it also allows for greater opportunities for community-oriented policing activities and necessary training. Several factors influence an agency's ability to hire and retain a new officer. The Criminal Justice Training Commission (CJTC) conducts the basic law enforcement academy (BLEA) and is the only entity allowed to certify and train police officers. Insufficient number of spots results in long wait times for agencies with new hires of several months. During this long wait time the agency must pay the officer, however, they are not able to carry out the duties of a commissioned law enforcement officer. Insufficient spots and the current policy mean an entry level officer often is not deployable for over a year after hire date (wait time, academy, 3 months field training). While the CJTC is the only entity allowed to certify and train police officers, agencies are required to pay for 25% of the cost. This cost share is an unfunded mandate and adds to the burden smaller communities must endure when they hire an entry level officer. **We ask the legislature to provide funding for additional capacity for the CJTC to provide BLEA training including funding for a new training academy needed to provide the necessary training and remove the 25% cost share. Furthermore, CJTC should eliminate the "by name" requirement necessary to reserve a seat in BLEA. Individual law enforcement agencies should be trusted to reserve a seat with only their agency name, and then provide a specific, individual name to CJTC in a reasonable amount of time prior to the start of the academy. If the respective agency cannot fill that seat within a reasonable time, the seat will be given to another agency, but mandating that each seat is assigned a specific new-employees name is unrealistic and places an enormous burden on smaller jurisdictions.**

Thank you for the opportunity to share our concerns about public safety and the increases in crime in our region and across the state. We are grateful the 2023 State Legislature took several steps to address the rise in crime rates and we believe there is more work to be done. We look forward to meeting with you collectively on November 1, 2023 at 6:00 PM at University Place City Hall to come together to discuss in more detail

With your leadership, we are confident that the State Legislature can work collaboratively to address these concerns and improve the safety for every Washingtonian.

Sincerely,



Mayor Michael McCullough
City of Bonney Lake



Mayor Beau Burkett
City of Buckley



Mayor Ronald Frederick
City of DuPont



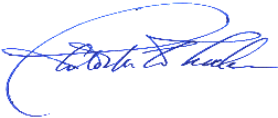
Mayor David Baublits
Town of Eatonville



Mayor Brett Wittner
City of Fircrest



Mayor Tracie Markley
City of Gig Harbor



Mayor Jason Whalen
City of Lakewood



Mayor Shanna Styron Sherrell
City of Milton



Mayor Josh Penner
City of Orting



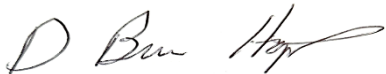
Mayor Leanne Guier
City of Pacific



Mayor Dean Johnson
City of Puyallup



Mayor Kimber Ivy
City of Roy



Mayor Bruce Hopkins
Town of Ruston



Mayor Dick Muri
Town of Steilacoom



Mayor Kathy Hayden
City of Sumner



Mayor Steve Worthington
City of University Place