

January 23rd, 2023

Dear Chair Hansen,

Thank you for hearing House Bill 1178 concerning local government's authority to regulate firearms sponsored by Representative Hackney. In the State of Washington and in our communities, we are facing an unacceptable gun violence epidemic. In Washington, because of state preemption (RCW 9.41.290), cities are nearly completely prohibited from passing our own laws to keep our communities safe from gun violence. This must change. As Mayors, we are committed to doing everything we can to prevent gun violence and keep our communities whole. But the truth is, right now, we cannot take the action we need to take. Cities and towns across our state need to have the freedom to enact laws that reduce gun violence.

With the restoration of local authority, our cities would be able to build upon the progress made at the State level to address gun violence, by exploring policies that could prohibit guns on city property where children are present, like libraries, parks or community centers, prohibit people under the influence from carrying a handgun, and open the door to other innovative and common-sense ideas to protect our communities and prevent gun violence.

Gun violence has impacted too many families in our cities, and we can never accept this as normal. The solution requires a holistic approach – law enforcement, community-based solutions, pathways for prevention and intervention, and the ability to set our own gun safety laws. Restoring local authority is a key piece of the approach. Local leaders are best positioned to address the challenges facing their communities. We should be empowered to make decisions about gun safety to keep our communities safe. Gun violence prevention can—and should—happen at every level of government.

As Mayors of Seattle, Bellingham, Everett, Kenmore, Kirkland, Olympia, and Redmond, we strongly encourage the legislature to pass House Bill 1178 concerning local government's authority to regulate firearms sponsored by Representative Hackney this session.

Sincerely,

Mayor Bruce Harrell, City of Seattle

Mayor Seth Fleetwood, City of Bellingham

Mayor Cassie Franklin, City of Everett

Mayor Nigel Herbig, City of Kenmore

Mayor Penny Sweet, City of Kirkland

Mayor Cheryl Selby, City of Olympia

Mayor Angela Birney, City of Redmond