

June 7, 2020

Mayor Durkan and Chief Best:

As elected officials who represent residents of Seattle and people coming from across the region to the city to call for justice for black lives, we call on you to take urgent and sustained action to de-escalate the police tactics used in daily protests. We are in the midst of a citywide and worldwide focus on black lives, racial justice, and the racism that is embedded in our systems, most clearly exhibited by excessive use of police force and patterns of racially biased policing. We are concerned that the response of the Seattle Police Department (SPD) is escalating the conflict in the streets of Seattle, particularly in Capitol Hill and in communities of color, with their inappropriate use of force.

We firmly request that you direct SPD to change their tactics.

Community voices, particularly black-led movements, are bringing forward lists of demands including a reimagined and accountable policing model. These demands require our focused attention in the weeks and months to come. As elected officials, we pledge to advance and support policies that 1) de-militarize the police, 2) further restrict use of excessive or deadly force by police, 3) increase accountability and transparency in police union contracts, 4) give subpoena and other investigative powers to independent oversight boards and 5) redirect police department funding to community-based alternatives.

The continued violence by the police will only polarize this necessary conversation in unproductive ways.

We are specifically asking you to end the damage that SPD has caused by overreaction to mostly peaceful protests. This harms the relationship between law enforcement and the community, harms our city, and harms law enforcement officers and their families in the form of emotional trauma. Physical violence is being perpetrated against members of our community by SPD. Emotional trauma and extraordinary racial aggression is being inflicted. Constitutional rights are at risk. Police tactics are exacerbating health risks amidst a devastating respiratory pandemic. The public health crisis of law enforcement anti-black violence is so extreme as to have eclipsed the previous disease that gripped our city.

It is well-[documented](#) that peaceful protests are being targeted by law enforcement and turned into violent conflict. No amount of secondary illegal activity has happened that warrants this response. We will have time in the future to discuss necessary reforms for future such conflicts, but for now, the violence must stop. Deploying police in riot gear to form a wall of officers positioned against peaceful protestors is not conducive to de-escalation and healing; a moratorium on tear gas that is then replaced with pepper spray is not de-escalation.

We recognize that much of the police response has been driven by tensions, emotions, and fear running high on all sides. The only path forward that will heal our city necessitates first and foremost direction to SPD from the highest level to change their tactics immediately.

Sincerely,

Seattle City Councilmember Lorena Gonzalez  
Seattle City Councilmember Teresa Mosqueda  
Seattle City Councilmember Tammy Morales  
Seattle City Councilmember Lisa Herbold  
King County Councilmember Girmay Zahilay  
King County Councilmember Joe McDermott  
King County Councilmember Rod Dembowski  
State Senator Rebecca Saldaña  
State Senator Manka Dhingra  
State Senator Bob Hasegawa  
State Senator Joe Nguyen  
State Senator David Frockt  
State Senator Jamie Pedersen  
State Representative Jesse Johnson  
State Representative Debra Entenman  
State Representative Sharon Tomiko Santos  
State Representative Javier Valdez  
State Representative Mia Gregerson  
State Representative Nicole Macri  
State Representative Frank Chopp  
State Representative Joe Fitzgibbon  
State Representative Eileen Cody  
State Representative Noel Frame  
State Representative Zack Hudgins  
State Representative Steve Bergquist  
State Representative Lauren Davis