



City of Seattle
Mayor Jenny A. Durkan

October 15, 2020

Dear Commissioners,

I understand that you'll be discussing the Human Rights Commission's recent letter calling on the Mayor's resignation at your meeting this evening. I have already conveyed this to SOCR, but I would deeply appreciate the opportunity to attend this meeting to discuss this issue with you all. In the event that is not possible, I did want to reach out immediately and provide some more information and context, which are necessary for any discussion about the HRC letter.

While there are no doubt legitimate policy disagreements between the Human Rights Commission and the Mayor's Office, it is crucial to note that the Commission's letter contained several factual inaccuracies and misrepresentations of the Mayor's actions. I wanted to provide those to you now so that we can engage in an informed and productive discussion.

The HRC letter alleges that the Mayor "authorized the use of police violence and tools of military force against peaceful demonstrators, civilian bystanders, legal observers and members of the media." This is inaccurate: Per [Article VI Section 4 of the City Charter](#), the Chief of Police – not the Mayor – has management authority of the Police Department, meaning that the Mayor does not have the authority to make such an authorization, which would have been inappropriate regardless.

The letter also alleges that the Mayor "objected to proposed reductions in SPD's budget and objected to immediate proposed actions that would force the department to respond to its harms to the community and implement systemic changes." This is also inaccurate: Mayor Durkan is the one who has proposed both a 10% reduction to SPD's budget and a 12% reduction to SPD's budget. The Mayor's 2020 Revised Budget proposal included \$20 million in cuts to the department, which the Council adopted. The Mayor's 2021 Proposed Budget includes a \$60 million reduction to the police budget, \$20 million of which are cuts.

The letter also alleges that the Mayor "refused to consider common sense police reform" measure. This is inaccurate. Since the protests began this summer, the Mayor has supported a series of police reforms demanded by community, including:

- Requiring body cameras to be turned on at protests and updating SPD's policy with regard to mourning bands.
- She worked to provide additional resources to the City's accountability partners (OIG, CPC, and OIG)
- In addition, the Mayor was the person who originally requested the accountability partners to review SPD's crowd control tactics, which the Commission cites in their claim. The Mayor requested this review specifically because of her concern regarding SPD's use of force at recent protests.

- The Mayor and former Chief Best and Chief Diaz remain committed to ensuring public safety, while reimagining policing. That process is underway with a number of changes proposed in the 2021 budget

The HRC letter also alleges that the Mayor has “failed to adequately address Seattle’s growing homelessness crisis...and has chosen not to act.” While there is undeniably much more that needs to be done to help our neighbors experiencing homelessness transition into permanent housing, the HRC’s assertion is incorrect. Since the Mayor took office, the City has invested nearly \$1.5 billion in affordable housing across the city. Under the Mayor, City homelessness spending has grown from \$71.3 million in 2017 to \$147.5 million in 2020. The Mayor’s 2021 Proposed Budget also includes the most single-year spending to address our homelessness crisis in Seattle’s history. This plan would support 425 new shelter space, 600 new units of Permanent Supportive Housing, and maintain 2,300 existing shelter spaces.

The letter also alleges that the Mayor has “refused to find and fund progressive revenue streams.” The Mayor was one of the leading advocates for a regional payroll tax that was considered in Olympia earlier this year. She continues to believe in and support a regional progressive payroll tax which would prevent companies from leaving Seattle for nearby cities. In addition, the Mayor proposed – and the City Council unanimously passed - a tax on rideshare companies.

Finally, the HRC alleges that the Mayor “has repeatedly refused to adopt a city budget despite receiving multiple balanced budget drafts from Council, in clear violation of her legal duty as Executive.” The Mayor has adopted two city budgets. The Mayor did veto the Council’s 2020 Revised Budget, and the veto is a Charter-granted authority ([Article IV Section 12](#)) of the Mayor. The Mayor made clear that [she will implement](#) Council’s 2020 Revised Budget after the Council overrode her veto.

My goal in sharing this information is not to minimize or dispute the undeniable policy differences between the Human Rights Commission and the Mayor, but to ensure that we can have a discussion grounded in facts.

Understanding the complexity of the issues facing our City, the Mayor has offered her vision, plan, and path forward on each of these challenges including reimagining policing and investing in BIPOC communities with an unprecedented \$100 million. The Mayor has worked to find a common path forward on each of these challenges and will continue to do so.

I’m hopeful that we’ll get to discuss further this evening.

Sincerely,

Shefali Ranganathan
Deputy Mayor
City of Seattle