

September 20, 2023

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee:

As you and your agencies work to propose supplemental updates to 2023-2025 biennial budgets, cities look forward to working with you and the Legislature to address the many opportunities we have to further build strong cities and a great state. We know that there continue to be opportunities to partner in areas like public safety, behavioral health, housing affordability, and climate change. Washington's 281 cities are committed to working alongside you as we navigate these opportunities and challenges.

As you prepare your proposed supplemental budget updates, we ask for your support for these programs that are crucial to cities.

Infrastructure Funding

Infrastructure funding persists as one of cities' most significant needs. Cities are grateful to the legislature for fully funding the Public Works Assistance Account at \$400 million in the 2023- 2025 biennial budget and request that maintaining these investments remain a priority. Continued investments in operations and maintenance are needed to address aging infrastructure systems, identify service lines that need replacement, protect ratepayers, and allow cities to be proactive in climate resiliency and preparedness. As cities continue to respond to the impacts of climate change, we would request that more direct Climate Commitment Act funding be made available to cities to support the reduction of carbon emissions and improve climate resiliency in infrastructure.

Funding for cities to address illegal drug usage, including implementation of SB 5536

Cities are grateful for the investments made in the 2023-2025 biennial budget related to substance use disorder (SUD) treatment and law enforcement co-responder teams. However, the need is greater than the funding provided in the biennial budget, and the need is growing significantly as cities implement SB 5536 (2023). While cities supported the need for a new statewide approach to drug possession, this creates new mandates for cities increasing the impact on municipal courts, prosecution, public defense, and local law enforcement, and cities need funding to support these new mandates. Cities need additional direct funding for expansion and creation of new municipal therapeutic courts and other diversion programs, as well as funding for law enforcement assisted diversion and co-responder programs. The appropriations made in the 2023 legislative session for co-responder teams, for example, are a good start, but cities request an increase of \$2 million in the 2024 supplemental budget to create and expand co-responder teams to be able to serve more of our most vulnerable residents. Further, for the diversion programs to function well and support the most vulnerable in our communities, cities also need continued state investments in expanding SUD and behavioral health treatment at all levels of need, from crisis to outpatient, and at all corners of the state.

Continued investment in behavioral health treatment

While important progress has been made recently to expand community behavioral health services, there is widespread consensus that additional investments are needed to create a robust network of behavioral health treatment accessible to all communities. As cities expand co-responder teams and other crisis response services, it is crucial to have access to crisis behavioral health treatment to accept individuals experiencing a mental health crisis. But we know that crisis treatment is not comprehensive treatment, and there must also be sufficient inpatient, intensive outpatient, and ongoing outpatient treatment available to meet the behavioral and mental health needs of our residents. This will require capital investment, and ongoing financial support for operational expenses.

Continued and increased investment in affordable housing and infrastructure to support housing

Cities have come to the table with the state to support significant new policies to increase housing supply in our communities. Proposals such as middle housing, permit processing reforms, restrictions on local design review and others were ultimately supported because cities know how important making progress on our housing crisis is to our residents. We were pleased to see large investments in programs like the Housing Trust Fund to ensure that units affordable to lower income community members are brought online. Cities statewide are planning for an increase of over 500,000 units at the lower end of the income scale, and without both new revenues and increases in existing programs, we know that the private market will not be able to deliver those units. The AWC Housing Solutions Group identified a need of at least \$1 billion in additional investments per year to meet this need. Please continue to support new housing revenues for the state and local governments and maximized investments in state affordable housing programs.

Maintained investment in local government transportation systems

Strong state spending on city transportation infrastructure and state agencies like the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) and Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB) is vital for maintaining our current assets, supporting multimodal efforts, and bolstering the statewide economy. Unfortunately, local preservation and maintenance needs continue to far outpace the investments made in each budget. The lack of investment, in part, means that city streets (as part of state highways) rated below 45 mph and freeway ramps have been deprioritized, creating significant safety concerns. We urge that you commit to maintaining and providing new transportation investments to meet residents' needs.

Support for law enforcement recruitment and retention

Cities ask for ongoing state investments to help train approximately 7,000 city employed law enforcement officers. The CJTC campus is in need of upgrades, and it is time to explore new training location options to better support modern law enforcement training needs. Cities support fully funding the CJTC Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) so they can provide adequate BLEA classes to train new officers. Additionally, we ask for sufficient funding of at least \$2 million to develop additional regional BLEA training opportunities that will make it more efficient to train new officers and reduce the impact of having to travel to the CJTC main campus.

Additionally, cities ask for direct financial assistance similar to the \$20 million special criminal justice assistance fund in the 21-23 budget to help address recruitment and retention of officers. Cities also ask for increased investment in critical public safety programs around reducing auto theft and property crime particularly organized retail theft.

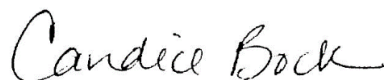
Studying first responders PTSD workers compensation claims

It has been five years since PTSD was established as a presumptive occupational disease for law enforcement officers and firefighters. Cities are committed to the health and well-being of our first responders and want to do everything possible to treat those suffering from PTSD as well as focus on prevention and mental health to avoid work related PTSD in our first responders. The apparent emerging trends in PTSD claims are concerning. We would like to work with the Department of Labor and Industries to study the data, evaluate the best way to insure positive

outcomes for our first responders, and work on strategies to avoid additional cases of PTSD as well as other work place injuries for first responders. We support funding requests that would help the Department initiate and continue the work in this area.

Thank you for your ongoing support for the cities and towns of Washington State. City leaders appreciate your commitment to collaboration during the pandemic as we work together for the best interests of our residents. We look forward to continuing this strong partnership.

Sincerely,



Candice Bock
Government Relations Director



Deanna Dawson
Chief Executive Officer

cc: David Schumacher, Director, Office of Financial Management
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Senator June Robinson, Vice Chair, Ways & Means Committee
Senator Lynda Wilson, Ranking Member, Ways & Means Committee
Representative Timm Ormsby, Chair, Appropriations Committee
Representative Drew Stokesbary, Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee