

Hello State Legislators,

As local governments, public safety is our number one job, and we are asking for help from the state Legislature to restore tough boundaries, maintain local control, and protect our communities. We, the undersigned mayors, have become increasingly concerned with the changes made by the House to SB 5536. The changes represent a step back in accountability and make it more difficult for local governments to keep our communities safe.

We recognize substance use disorder is a medical issue and that substance use disorder treatment and services are necessary. We appreciate that the Legislature has taken action to approve crisis response facilities and has allocated funding to construct those facilities to ensure that treatment and services are available. However, even with available facilities, substance use disorder impairs individual decision-making ability which prevents many from entering necessary treatment and services without being adequately compelled. Given that, any final version of SB 5536 needs to ensure that the final bill enacted encourages individuals to obtain necessary treatment, holds individuals accountable, and directs the court to implement a mandatory penalty that is often necessary for the individual to enter and complete treatment.

We are supportive of the Senate's proposal to make possession of controlled substances punishable as a gross misdemeanor and for the additional statutory guidance to the judiciary on appropriate sentencing levels. However, there are specific issues within the House-approved version of SB 5536 that are gravely concerning to local cities who are accountable for and must deal with the local impacts associate with drug use.

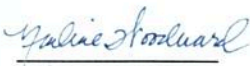
- We are concerned that the version passed out of the House lacks adequate accountability to compel an individual to seek and complete the services they need. Though substance use disorder is a medical issue, someone that suffers from substance use disorder does not have the right to victimize the community. The state must recognize that substance use disorder impairs individual decision-making ability and has substantial impact on the individual and the community they live in and that individual requires incentives, which often includes being compelled, to seek help. The law that ultimately gets passed out of the legislature needs to contain tougher guardrails so that individuals enter and complete the necessary treatment and services. We are urging that the legislature retain the mandatory minimums and gross misdemeanor penalty in the Senate version for final passage of the bill.
- We are also concerned with the addition to the legislation language that restricts the ability of local jurisdictions to regulate the public use of drugs. The House insertion into the Senate bill will preempt local laws passed or being considered by many cities across the state. The public use of drugs presents an immediate and prolonged health and safety risk to our local public from the discarded paraphernalia, effects of the drug on the user, and potential contact with the substance by law abiding people. For these reasons cities ought to have the power to address this dangerous situation in a manner that is best to protect their families, visitors, workforce, businesses, and others in their community. We are concerned that current local laws that have proven to be effective at addressing these impacts will be replaced with a state law that will fail

to address the local issues. Public use is different than simple possession for these reasons and should be treated as such.

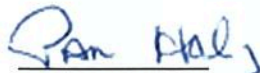
Our communities are tired of the rampant drug use and the resulting violence, vandalism, and crimes that typically accompany substance abuse. We hear about it every single day. Decriminalizing drugs and taking away necessary accountability has sent the wrong message to the small percentage of criminal element that is negatively impacting the overwhelming majority of law-abiding individuals in our communities.

Our families, businesses, and individuals deserve to live in a community where they feel safe and you can help us get there. Please address the measures outlined above so that we can stand in partnership in the safety of our communities.

Regards,



Nadine Woodward
Mayor
City of Spokane



Pam Haley
Mayor,
City of Spokane Valley



Chris Grover
Mayor,
City of Cheney



Cristella Kaminskas
Mayor,
City of Liberty Lake



Terri Cooper
Mayor,
City of Medical Lake



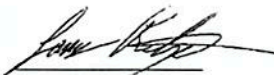
Kevin Freeman
Mayor,
City of Millwood



Jack Smith
Mayor,
City of Colville



Gregory McCune
Mayor,
City of Chewelah



Jim Retzer
Mayor,
City of Colfax



Blanche Barajas
Mayor,
City of Pasco



Terry Christensen
Mayor,
City of Richland



Cassie Franklin
Mayor,
City of Everett



Jon Nehring
Mayor,
City of Marysville



Brett Gailey
Mayor,
City of Lake Stevens



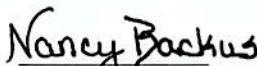
Russell Wiita
Mayor,
City of Sultan



Dana Ralph
Mayor,
City of Kent



Armando Pavone
Mayor,
City of Renton



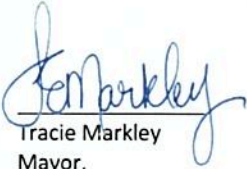
Nancy Backus
Mayor,
City of Auburn



Jason Whalen
Mayor,
City of Lakewood



Dean Johnson
Mayor,
City of Puyallup



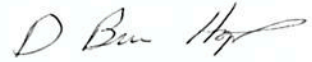
Tracie Markley
Mayor,
City of Gig Harbor



Josh Penner
Mayor,
City of Orting



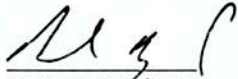
Shanna Styron Sherell
Mayor,
City of Milton



Bruce Hopkins
Mayor,
City of Ruston



Kathy Hayden
Mayor,
City of Sumner



Michael McCullough
Mayor,
City of Bonney Lake



Bill McKay
Mayor,
City of Kennewick



Janice Deccio
Mayor,
City of Yakima