

Mayors and Business Leaders for Public Safety

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Snohomish County Mayors' Statement on SB 5536, Proposed *Blake* Fix

EVERETT — April 12, 2023 — The House version of legislation designed to address the state's drug possession laws under the *Blake* decision does not provide the necessary tools to effectively address public safety challenges in Snohomish County, according to the four mayors leading the Mayors and Business Leaders for Public Safety coalition.

While Everett Mayor Cassie Franklin, Marysville Mayor Jon Nehring, Lake Stevens Mayor Brett Gailey and Sultan Mayor Russell Wiita appreciate the work of Snohomish County senators to enact [Senate Bill 5536](#) regarding controlled substances, they remain concerned that changes to the legislation made in the House of Representatives would make the new law ineffective in improving public safety:

“The change in Washington’s drug possession laws has led to a variety of social problems that are ravaging our communities at unprecedented levels. To reverse this trend and to help those with substance use disorders find the treatment they need, a law that more effectively balances legal consequences and treatment is needed to reverse the impacts of the *Blake* decision. Regrettably, we do not see that happening with the changes that the House of Representatives has made to SB 5536.

While the proposed bill will offer some modest relief, it does not go far enough to make the kind of changes needed to curb destructive behaviors and ensure public safety. As a result, we cannot support the bill in its current form.

Snohomish County individuals, families and businesses are beyond frustrated by what they see happening around them. Every day, our offices receive complaints from residents and visitors about the effects of our drug possession laws on our communities – from vandalism and property crime to theft and much, much worse. Our drug laws are sending the wrong message, resulting in increased drug use, rampant crime and dangerous behaviors that threaten the quality of life for law-abiding people everywhere in Snohomish County.

We recognize crafting legislation requires a collaborative approach, and acknowledge that it is a process of give and take. However, where the safety of our citizens is concerned, we cannot compromise to the

point of accepting the House version of SB 5536, because it will not help us stem the tide of drug use fueling criminal activity in our cities.”

To learn more about the coalition, visit keepourcitysafe.com.