

BRINGING TOGETHER LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND BUSINESS LEADERS IN AN INNOVATIVE APPROACH TO IMPROVING PUBLIC SAFETY

Improving public safety is the #1 issue in our communities. To keep our communities strong and vibrant, community members must feel safe. Increased crime not only puts individuals and businesses at risk, but it also increases the cost of everything we do.

Public safety impacts everyone – in urban, suburban, and rural areas alike. Neither the issues nor the solutions are partisan; we must all work together to solve these problems. This is a countywide problem that demands countywide solutions.

Mayors and Business Leaders for Public Safety intends to take a countywide approach. It's the first time that a coalition of the county's business leadership has come together to take on these issues. Real progress will require the public, private, and non-profit sectors working more closely together than ever before.

Public safety is a complex issue. Increases in homelessness, drug addiction, and untreated mental health illnesses lead directly to negative street activity and increases in crimes against people and property. These are interrelated problems that demand comprehensive and creative solutions.

Our cities are already working aggressively to solve these problems, investing in first responders, imbedded social workers, housing, services and other innovative public safety strategies. However, more needs to be done at all levels of government. Among the solutions the coalition will be pursuing are:

- Providing more funding for both social service agencies and law enforcement – both are critical, but neither is sufficient on its own;
- Allowing law enforcement officers to more fully use their training, experience, and judgement in the field;
- Increasing public transparency on the charging, bail, conviction and sentencing decisions of local prosecutors and judges; and
- Providing more tools and resources to address the fallout from the *Blake* decision that decriminalized nearly all drug possession, including possible legislative fixes.

Making meaningful progress on public safety depends on everyone contributing to the solutions. We can't expect our dedicated law enforcement professionals to solve this alone; they are a major piece of the puzzle, but we need support from all levels of government. We are asking our leaders in Olympia, County government and others to join our local municipal leaders so that we can address these critical issues.

We're all in this together.