

Seattle
Community
Police Commissioner

Our city. Our safety.
Our police. Better together.

VIA EMAIL

May 20, 2019

Dear Chief Carmen Best,

We write in response to the Seattle Police Department's "Disparity Review – Part 1," filed with the Court in April 2019. In the audit, SPD utilizes Propensity Score Matching to identify disparity in how officers interact with populations in Seattle. Some of the audit's findings are not surprising, reflecting similar findings in a number of previous analyses including the SPD's 2017 Stops and Detentions Annual Report, 2017 Use of Force Annual Report, and the Monitor's Ninth and Tenth Systemic Assessments. They are nonetheless of great concern to the Community Police Commission (CPC).

The following findings demonstrate that there is disparity in officer interactions with the public in Seattle:

1. Subjects of color are more likely to be frisked than white subjects.

According to the Disparity Review, Asian people were frisked 33.9 percent more frequently than white people. People whom officers perceived to be Hispanic were nearly 30 percent more likely to be frisked than white people. Black people were 18.2 percent more likely to be frisked than white people.

2. Subjects of color are less likely to be found with a weapon when frisked.

The Disparity Review found that despite being frisked the least, people perceived as white were the most likely to have a weapon on them while being frisked. For example, people perceived to be American Indian and Alaskan Native were 40 percent less likely than white people to have a weapon on them while being frisked. In other words, officers were able to more accurately discern whether a white subject had a weapon.

The 2017 Stops and Detentions Annual Report noted that weapons were least frequently recovered from subjects perceived to be Black.

3. People of color are more likely to have a firearm pointed at them than white people.

The Disparity Review states that Hispanic people were nearly twice as likely as white people to have a firearm pointed at them. Black people were 42.3 percent more likely to have a firearm pointed at them. Similarly, for Asian people, it was 42 percent.

The Monitor's Ninth Systemic Assessment found that SPD officers are more likely to point firearms at historically underrepresented subjects than white subjects but are more likely to go hands-on with white subjects. Specifically, Black, Hispanic/Latino, and Asian/Pacific Islander subjects of use of force were significantly more likely to have firearms pointed at them than white subjects.

As stated above, the CPC was not surprised by these findings given the previous analyses as well as national trends. When SPD was working on the methodology for the Disparity Review, we met with SPD to express that the primary concern for the CPC is not whether there is disparity, but what SPD can do to address the disparity that we know exists in policing in Seattle. Addressing disparity in policing, rather than measuring it, continues to be a priority for the CPC.

SPD Policy 5.140 on bias-free policing states that SPD shall consult with the CPC and the Office of the Inspector General (OIG) to explore effective alternative practices that would result in less disproportionate impact. According to the policy, alternative enforcement practices may include addressing the targeted behavior in a different way, de-emphasizing the practice in question, or other measures.

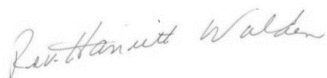
We request a formal meeting to initiate a collaboration between SPD and the CPC to address the disparities confirmed by the audit. One such area that the CPC would like to reengage with SPD on is training of officers, especially given that since previous conversations between the two agencies on this subject, both the CPC and SPD have had changes in leadership. We hope to work with SPD on efforts to negate bias and eliminate inequitable treatment of marginalized communities via SPD's training of officers.

In addition, the CPC has the following recommendations and questions related to the Disparity Review:

- 1) In future audits and reports by SPD, SPD should disaggregate Pacific Islander people from Asian people in the "Non-White" racial identification categories. In the wake of the shooting death of Iosia Faletogo, it is important to recognize that the historic grouping of Asians and Pacific Islanders ignores the different biases and systematic barriers that they may respectively face. Disaggregating this information will allow both SPD and accountability partners to address these biases and their impacts more effectively.
- 2) As SPD prepares to relaunch the Community Service Officer (CSO) program, exploring the underlying cause of disparity is paramount. Asking Community Service Officers to step into communities that are disparately enforced, and therefore may have difficulty trusting police, leaves CSOs at a strategic disadvantage. How does SPD plan to utilize the CSO unit, their work, and their expertise to inform SPD's efforts to reduce disparity in policing?
- 3) What are next steps for SPD in relation to the Disparity Review? Beyond releasing the report to the public, are there plans to discuss the findings with affected communities? How are the findings being shared within SPD, including specific units and precincts? What are next steps for SPD leadership to address the audit's findings?

We look forward to meeting with you to initiate a collaboration between SPD and the CPC to address the disparities confirmed by the Disparity Review to exist in policing in Seattle and establish concrete next steps, including reviewing SPD's training of officers. We respectfully ask that you respond to this request and to our recommendations and questions above by the end of this month.

Sincerely,



Rev. Harriett Walden, Co-Chair
Community Police Commission



Isaac Ruiz, Co-Chair
Community Police Commission



Emma Catague, Co-Chair
Community Police Commission

Cc:

Community Police Commission
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Councilmember Lorena Gonzalez
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Assistant Chief Lesley Cordner, Seattle Police Department
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