

**Seattle  
Community  
Police Commission**

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

VIA EMAIL

March 23, 2020

Dear Chief Carmen Best,

Thank you for your response to the Community Police Commission's (CPC) feedback on the Seattle Police Department's (SPD) Part II – Disparity Review Report. We write specifically to address your comment that our interpretation of the quantitative analysis in your report that disparity in policing in Seattle exists in part due to officer bias is “irresponsible and inflammatory.”

We object to the characterization of our interpretation of the data to be irresponsible and inflammatory and that we are drawing conclusions based on no proof whatsoever. We want to clarify for the department via this letter the fact that our intention was to demonstrate our understanding of the SPD's audit and to earnestly ask SPD to partner with us in an effort to address the issues highlighted in its report.

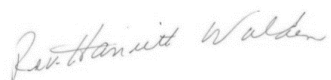
We want to acknowledge again that the CPC does not believe that all disparity in policing in Seattle is caused solely by officer bias. We understand that there are many causes of disparity, including systemic issues, witness bias, etc. It seems that our feedback that the quantitative analyses in the report suggest that at least one cause of disparity in policing in Seattle is officer bias caused great offense to you and the department, and we seek to understand why. It may be due to a difference in our understanding of the word “bias” and hope the following explanation clarifies our understanding of the word.

When we discuss the presence of officer bias, we come from a place of understanding that everyone carries implicit bias. Implicit bias trainings, much like the training by Dr. Bryant Marks that all sworn SPD officers receive, teach us that we all have biases. We do not think that police officers are unique in having biases, nor do we think officers are bad people because they have biases. However, the impact of officer bias is significant because the decisions of a police officer, and the implicit bias that occurs in moments of officer discretion such as stops, frisks, and arrests, can lead to life-altering consequences.

We highlighted officer bias for several reasons: 1) bias, while not unique in police officers, is important to address in officers because of the difference in power between a police officer and a community member; 2) the impact of this phenomenon has significant implications for communities disparately impacted by policing such as Black and Indigenous communities; 3) it is an issue that SPD can tackle head on, as opposed to larger systemic issues out of SPD's control; and 4) it is critical to acknowledge the existence of bias to begin to address it. In a phone call with Charles Lanfear, who conducted the analyses in your report, he agreed that our interpretation of the data that officer bias is most likely one cause of disparities in policing was a sound interpretation. We hope this clarifies for you that our intention in discussing officer bias was not to be inflammatory or irresponsible.

It is clear to us that the CPC and SPD would benefit greatly from developing a common language and understanding surrounding racial equity and justice, including our definitions of the word "bias," which we would welcome. We would appreciate meeting with you and/or your staff in person to discuss how best to move forward.

Sincerely,



Rev. Harriett Walden, Co-Chair  
Community Police Commission



Prachi Dave, Co-Chair  
Community Police Commission



Rev. Aaron Williams, Co-Chair  
Community Police Commission