



Justice... Professionalism... Service... Since 1886

June 5, 2013

The Honorable Larry Gossett, Chairman
Metropolitan King County Council
516 Third Avenue, Room 1200
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Chairman Gossett:

In the latter part of May, KCBA wrote you to express support for the establishment of a task force to study and report to the Council on possible public defense delivery systems. As the Executive and Council are looking at delivery models that would bring the function of public defense in-house, KCBA felt it appropriate to ask for an opportunity to provide input. A primary concern is that the models being considered by the Council do not seem to address fundamental issues such as the qualitative impact on the clients served and the criminal justice system as a whole. As you are well aware, our current public defense providers have a local and national reputation of excellence. They are one of a handful of systems that are tackling issues in the criminal justice system such as disproportionality and alternatives to incarceration. We are concerned that the quality, advocacy, independence and trust in the system be maintained in any delivery model adopted by the council.

KCBA recently learned that the Council passed an amendment (Amendment to Amendment 2 to proposed ordinance 2013-0215) that creates a task force with the very limited function of "... issuing a report and recommendations on the feasibility of the county using outside entities, such as one or more public corporations, nonprofit organizations or private corporations, to perform county public defense-related services that promote system improvements and efficiencies in the King County public defense system through innovative approaches to criminal justice reform." KCBA has been asked to provide a representative for this task force.

While KCBA appreciates the opportunity to participate on this task force, we are disappointed in the narrowness of the task force mission. The King County Council is known for listening to its constituents and inviting a wide range of voices to provide input during the legislative process. The Council appears to be ignoring this principle on this important and far-reaching issue. We urge the Council to reconsider the limitations on the task force and allow the task force to provide input on the overall public defense delivery model to be adopted by the Council. We urge the Council to obtain the input of public defense clients, families of clients served, community groups that will be impacted, social justice agencies and the public. Like the Council, KCBA is committed to a fair and equitable justice system. It is only with the information from those in the community that we can reach this common goal. Again, we urge you to expand the scope of the task force to ensure that the quality work being done by our current system continues under any new delivery model.

The Honorable Larry Gossett

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Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'R. Mitchell', enclosed within a circular scribble.

Richard E. Mitchell

KCBA President, 2012-2013

cc:

The Honorable Rod Dembowski

The Honorable Kathy Lambert

The Honorable Larry Phillips

The Honorable Julia Patterson

The Honorable Jane Hague

The Honorable Pete von Reichbauer

The Honorable Joe McDermott

The Honorable Reagan Dunn

The Honorable Dow Constantine