



Date: 6/25/2020

RE: Comments in support of HB 4203

Central City Concern (CCC) is a non-profit direct service organization that provides integrated primary and behavioral health care, supportive and affordable housing, and employment services to people impacted by homelessness in the Tri-County area. Central City Concern operates about 2,100 units of affordable housing, serves 9,000 patients annually through our 13 Federally Qualified Health Centers, makes 1,200 job placements annually. **Our programs and properties span Districts 33,36,42,43,44,45,46,47,48 and 50**

“Crucial. This is a matter of public health. Tear gas during a viral respiratory pandemic? A disappointing and harmful tactic. I could go on. Please redirect police funding to OHP, to rent assistance, addiction treatment, and to other interventions that truly will trickle up over time. Thank you.” *Anna Geduldig, Hepatitis C Screening and Linkage to Care Specialist, Old Town Clinic*

Policing practices should adhere to public health-related guidance before deploying devices that exacerbate illness, especially in the times of this COVID pandemic:

The use of crowd-dispersing chemicals like tear gas and pepper spray cause multiple health effects for every person exposed. These include, mucus membrane irritation of the eyes, nose, throat and airways. Exposure to these agents is physically painful and traumatizing. In heavier exposures, these chemicals will cause inflammation in the lungs, damage to the membranes and constriction of airways.

Repeated exposures will have a compounding effect on both chronic and acute respiratory illnesses. These conditions include COPD, Chronic Bronchitis and acute infections like influenza, bacterial pneumonia and COVID-19. These chemical irritants induce coughing which releases respiratory droplets, directly creating a higher risk of spreading infectious illnesses, and could accelerate the spread of like Covid-19.

Many protesters are responsibly wearing masks as recommended for being out in public where physical distancing is difficult and the choice to use chemical irritants that attack the respiratory system directly counteracts the responsible public health safety steps of demonstrators.

Policing practices should adhere to behavioral health-related guidance to avoid repeat trauma of communities, especially those who are already impacted by past trauma:

Trauma informed care requires that we create heightened awareness of events, actions and words that can trigger trauma responses in our patients. The use of "crowd control" mechanisms like flash bangs is showing to cause distress in the people we care for, even when they are not actively involved in



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demonstrations. For those that that are part of demonstrations, police should be aware that triggering a trauma response makes it extremely difficult for someone to comply with any directions, verbal or otherwise. In other words, by using "crowd control" mechanisms that illicit trauma responses it will increase the risk of harm and breakdowns in communication.

Thank you,

Mercedes Elizalde
Public Policy Director
Central City Concern