



Date: 2/3/2021

RE: Letter in support of HB 2928

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 2,133 units of affordable housing, serves 9,000 patients annually through our 12 Federally Qualified Health Centers, makes 1,200 job placements annually. **Our programs and properties span House Districts 33, 36, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48 and 50**

Our neighbors, clients and patients sleeping unsheltered and some of our residents in downtown apartment buildings have been directly impacted by the indiscriminate and wide range use of chemical irritants and projectiles from police (in addition to the impacts on demonstrators). We are glad to see this legislation attempt to limit the use of these harmful devices that exist solely to inflict pain and bodily damage. We support limitations on using the devices to the fullest extent possible.

The use of chemicals irritants like tear gas 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. It is likely we will see the health impacts from this summer's actions for years to come.

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, chemical and projectiles has caused distress in the people we care for, even when they are not actively involved in 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, choosing to use "crowd control" mechanisms that illicit trauma responses will only increase the risk of harm and further breakdown communication.

Thank you,
Mercedes Elizalde
Public Policy Director
Central City Concern