



February 13, 2023

The Honorable Andy Billig
Senate Majority Leader
Washington State Senate
PO Box 40403
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable John Braun
Senate Republican Leader
Washington State Senate
PO Box 40420
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable Laurie Jinkins
Speaker of the House
Washington State House of Representatives
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

The Honorable J.T. Wilcox
House Minority Leader
Washington State House of Representatives
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Honorable members of the Washington State Legislature,

We the undersigned, representing a broad coalition of business associations and chambers of commerce, write to urgently request that you act during this legislative session to address the safety and welfare of Washington businesses and residents.

As Washington continues to navigate the numerous challenges of the pandemic, we are concerned about the sustained and significant rise in certain types of crime, including violent crime, as well as the decrease in the number of law enforcement officers.

The combination of these two factors has fostered an environment where too many of our state's residents no longer feel safe going to and from work, shopping in stores, dining in restaurants, and leaving vehicles in parking lots or even in front of their own homes.

We routinely hear reports of employees who are harassed as they make their way from the parking lot to work, job sites where items are stolen, retail stores where shoplifters brazenly walk off with merchandise, and store clerks who are threatened with guns or assaulted.

These anecdotal reports comport with the data. In 2021, violent crime in Washington rose 12.3% over the previous year, according to the most recent annual report from the Washington Association of Sheriffs and Police Chiefs.

Property crime dropped slightly as a statewide measure in 2021 but was still well above pre-pandemic levels. And in some cities, crimes such as motor vehicle theft, robbery, burglary, and aggravated assault showed significant increases over the previous year.

At the same time, the number of Washington law enforcement officers continues to decline with a loss of 495 commissioned officers reported in 2021, outpacing the decline of 172 officers reported in 2020. For the sake of our economy and for the well-being of our communities and families, these trends cannot continue. We can't afford to regress, especially on drug treatment and substance-abuse issues.

The purpose of this letter is not to prescribe specific solutions or to endorse specific legislation, but rather to emphasize the urgency of the crisis and implore you to find solutions this year that will ensure improved community outcomes. Individual members of this coalition may have their own view

regarding specific public safety-related proposals coming before you this year. Our collective request is that you carefully consider each proposal, giving each its due consideration in light of the urgency of our present situation.

We appreciate the opportunity to share these concerns with you and thank you for your consideration.

cc: Washington State Legislature

Sincerely,

Association of Washington Business
Associated General Contractors of Washington
Building Industry Association of Washington
NAIOP Commercial Real Estate Development
Association
Northwest Grocery Association
Washington Food Industry Association
Washington Hospitality Association
Washington Multi-Family Housing Association
Washington Retail Association
Washington Trucking Associations

Anacortes Chamber of Commerce
Auburn Area Chamber of Commerce
Bellingham Regional Chamber of Commerce
Birch Bay Chamber of Commerce
Burien Business Association
Burlington Chamber of Commerce
Coupeville Chamber of Commerce
Covington Chamber of Commerce
Economic Alliance of Snohomish County
Gig Harbor Chamber of Commerce
Greater Grays Harbor, Inc.
Greater Kitsap Chamber

Greater Lake Stevens Chamber of Commerce
Greater Spokane Inc.
Greater Spokane Valley Chamber of Commerce
Greater Vancouver Chamber
Greater Yakima Chamber of Commerce
Identity Clark County
Kent Chamber of Commerce
La Conner Chamber of Commerce
Lewis Clark Valley Chamber of Commerce
Magnolia Chamber of Commerce
Moses Lake Chamber of Commerce
One Redmond
Pullman Chamber of Commerce
Puyallup-Sumner Chamber of Commerce
Renton Chamber of Commerce
Seattle Metropolitan Chamber of Commerce
Seattle Southside Chamber of Commerce
Skamania County Chamber of Commerce
Sky Valley Chamber of Commerce
SnoValley Chamber of Commerce
South Sound Chamber Legislative Coalition
Tacoma-Pierce County Chamber
Thurston County Chamber of Commerce
West Plains Chamber of Commerce