

September 16, 2022

Governor Jay Inslee
Office of the Governor
PO Box 40002
Olympia, WA 98504

Dear Governor Inslee:

As you and your agencies work to develop the 2023-2025 biennial budgets, we understand the numerous challenges and opportunities facing our state. Financial uncertainty continues even while our state's economy remains robust and we face continued challenges in public safety, behavioral health, housing affordability, and climate change. Washington's 281 cities are committed to working alongside you as we navigate these challenges and opportunities. Together we can successfully lead our state and our communities to a stronger future. Your budget and policy leadership helps to ensure our cities remain the strong backbone of our state.

As you prepare your budget, we ask for your support for the following programs and proposals. We believe they are the key to the success of both the state and its cities, and the well-being of all Washingtonians.

Public Works Assistance Account

Year after year, infrastructure funding persists as one of cities' most significant needs. The Public Works Assistance Account is a crucial funding source in our efforts to provide the necessary infrastructure for our communities. Cities appreciated the investment made in the current budget, but applications for funding still far outstrip the monies available. President Biden and Congress have prioritized infrastructure and made significant investments through the Bipartisan Infrastructure Law; cities ask that the state take advantage of federal investments in infrastructure and fully fund the account. Cities also ask that you restore diverted revenues now instead of waiting until 2023. Infrastructure funding is needed to address aging systems that cannot keep up with current population growth, environmental needs, or support our state's growing economy. Absent an adequately funded public works assistance account, cities are forced to rely on traditional financing mechanisms. Unfortunately, but unavoidably, those financing mechanisms disproportionately impact rate paying citizens least able to afford the necessary public services.

Funding for cities in response to the *Blake* decision

Cities need additional direct funding to administer diversion programs related to misdemeanor drug possession cases handled by city law enforcement and adjudicated in municipal courts. Cities value the funding provided in the most recent supplemental budget for costs related to vacating previous convictions under the old law; however, we anticipate these costs could outpace what was provided. We would like to see at a minimum the current \$21 million in funding continued into the next biennium. Additionally, the ongoing costs related to responding to misdemeanor drug possession crimes and helping individuals seek alternative programs and treatments continue to impact city budgets. Cities ask for ongoing investment for grants to establish more community alternative response teams as well as therapeutic courts.

GMA & Comprehensive planning support

The state has increasingly turned to local government to help address critical long-term challenges, through the value of local long-range planning and community development, particularly in the arenas of housing, climate change, and salmon recovery. Most cities are facing challenges with capacity and staffing to deliver on their current expectations and scope of work, let alone the additional responsibilities. With the next comprehensive update cycle on the horizon, this is the time to make targeted investments. For instance, in 2020 the legislature passed HB 1220 which included significant enhancements of requirements for housing-related planning. Cities supported the requirement; however, it was not funded and under current law remains voluntary until the state provides sufficient financial support. We agree that these topics are deserving of additional work and attention, but cities need more resources to do the quality of work we all want to see.

Support for a systems approach to correct fish-blocking culverts

Cities are focused on developing and funding a comprehensive statewide approach to culverts, in partnership with several state agencies. This strategy will have the most positive impact on fish passage and salmon recovery. Cities request your support for a two-pronged approach on culvert funding. First, please fully fund the upcoming capital budget request from the Fish Barrier Removal Board that builds upon years of collaborative work across state agencies, local governments, and other stakeholders. Second, as part of any comprehensive investment or revenue package to address state-owned culverts, please commit to a long-term and comprehensive approach to fixing culverts that provides funding to address local government and private culverts alongside the state's culverts and corrects them on a systemwide basis.

Maintained investment in local government transportation systems

Strong state spending on city transportation infrastructure is vital for maintaining our current assets, supporting multimodal efforts, and bolstering the statewide economy. The state budget provides necessary resources for local governments through direct distributions, local projects, and agencies such as the Transportation Improvement Board (TIB) and the Freight Mobility Strategic Investment Board (FMSIB). Numerous studies affirm that both state and local governments spend too little on transportation systems, even before accounting for potential losses from the current pandemic and record inflation. We urge that you commit to maintaining and providing new transportation investments to meet residents' needs and provide ongoing support to our economy.

Criminal Justice Training Commission resources

Cities ask for ongoing state investments to help train approximately 7,000 city employed law enforcement officers. The CJTC campus is in need of upgrades, and it is time to explore new training location options to better support modern law enforcement training needs. Cities support fully funding the CJTC Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) so they can provide adequate BLEA classes to train new officers. Additionally, we ask for sufficient funding to develop regional BLEA training opportunities that will make it more efficient to train new officers and reduce the impact of having to travel to the CJTC main campus.

Funding for the Municipal Research & Services Center

MRSC has served local governments in Washington for more than 80 years by providing invaluable legal and technical assistance. MRSC's services are made possible by pooling a small portion of the liquor taxes and revenues that would otherwise be distributed to cities and counties. MRSC is a critical lifeline for cities during the providing crucial advice, technical assistance, and resources specific to local governments. We urge support for their modest request for a \$600,000 funding increase necessary to maintain this important service.

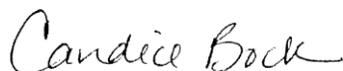
Public safety assistance funding

Cities ask that the state continue to fund the public safety assistance funds first allocated in the 2021-2023 budget. The state provided \$20 million in funding for cities to help offset the costs of new criminal justice legislation and support law enforcement. As cities across the state struggle to fill law enforcement positions and respond to

increasing crime, the need for this support is greater than ever. Public safety is a shared responsibility, and the state can help local efforts by making this funding ongoing for the next biennium.

Thank you for your ongoing support for the cities and towns of Washington State. City leaders appreciate your commitment to collaboration during the pandemic as we work together for the best interests of our residents. We look forward to continuing this strong partnership.

Sincerely,



Candice Bock
Government Relations Director



Deanna Dawson
Chief Executive Officer

cc: David Schumacher, Director, Office of Financial Management
Jamila Thomas, Chief of Staff
Scott Merriman, Legislative Liaison, Office of Financial Management
Senator Christine Rolfes, Chair, Ways & Means Committee
Senator Lynda Wilson, Ranking Member, Ways & Means Committee
Representative Timm Ormsby, Chair, Appropriations Committee
Representative Drew Stokesbary, Ranking Member, Appropriations Committee