



City of Tacoma

City Council

Speaker Laurie Jinkins
339C Legislative Building
PO Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504

Representative Jake Fey
415 John L. O'Brien Building
PO Box 40600
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Senator Yasmin Trudeau
227 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40427
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Representative Mari Leavitt
332 John L. O'Brien Building
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Representative Dan Bronoske
132D Legislative Building
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Senator T'wina Nobles
416 Legislative Building
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Representative Melanie Morgan
417 John L. O'Brien Building
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Representative Sharlett Mena
319 John L. O'Brien Building
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Senator Steve Conway
241 John A. Cherberg Building
PO Box 40429
Olympia, WA 98504



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[This letter will be sent to each addressee individually]

May 16, 2023

Dear [Legislator],

The Tacoma City Council would like to express our strong support for the legislature to pass a measure during the special session to address controlled substances laws in Washington. As you are aware, the statutes enacted by the legislature in ESB 5476 during the 2021 legislative session will expire on July 1, 2023. If the state fails to act during the special session, possession of controlled substances will effectively be decriminalized as of July 1st. This will lead many local jurisdictions to enact laws to address possession and public use of controlled substances, resulting in a patchwork of laws across the state.

The Council is greatly concerned about the impact of a failure to adopt a uniform policy statewide. The lack of consistency in the law creates uncertainty and public safety concerns. Under the multiple local ordinances, there would be a lack of clarity around what actions are unlawful in the different jurisdictions and levels of seriousness will differ for offenses.

In addition to the uncertainty, there is also a potential for more adverse consequences for people charged under these laws than under a state statute because the local laws may not include an option to have the charges removed from the person's record. This will also lead to disparate treatment as defendants in different areas of the state will have varying consequences and alternatives depending on where they are located.

As a Council, we support the state establishing a statewide standard and imposing either a misdemeanor or a gross misdemeanor for a violation of the law, so long as there is an option to avoid the criminal conviction on the defendant's record by completing treatment. We are requesting you vote in favor of a measure during the special session that will provide this clarity and certainty for the state and the residents of Tacoma.

Sincerely,

[City Council Member signatures to be added pending approval]