



SEATTLE CITY COUNCIL | DISTRICT 4
COUNCILMEMBER ALEX PEDERSEN

July 3, 2020

Honorable Nancy Backus
Office of Mayor
25 West Main Street
Auburn, WA 98001
nbackus@auburnwa.gov

Honorable Jim Ferrell
Office of Mayor
33325 8th Avenue South
Federal Way, WA 98003
jim.ferrell@cityoffederalway.com

Honorable Dana Ralph
Office of Mayor
220 Fourth Avenue South
Kent, WA 98032
mayor@kentwa.gov

Honorable Armondo Pavone
Office of Mayor
1055 South Grady Way
Renton, WA 98057
apavone@rentonwa.gov

Honorable Mitzi G. Johanknecht
Office of Sheriff
516 Third Avenue, Room W-150
Seattle, WA 98104
mitzi.johanknecht@kingcounty.gov

Re: Request to end challenge to King County's inquest process for SPD-Charleena Lyles case

Dear Mayors Backus, Ferrell, Ralph, Pavone and Sheriff Johanknecht:

As you know, Seattle has recently withdrawn our challenge to King County Executive Dow Constantine's new inquest rules. The purpose of this letter is to ask that your jurisdictions join Seattle and withdraw your challenge to these new inquest rules as well. Your withdrawal would allow for inquests that have been waiting a long time to proceed. Of particular importance to me and to many of my constituents is the inquest into the police killing of Charleena Lyles.

Ms. Lyles resided in the Magnuson Park neighborhood, which is in Seattle City Council District 4 that I have represented since November 2019. Two Seattle Police Department (SPD) officers killed Ms. Lyles 3 years ago in her apartment in front of her children. While I understand there is a strong interest from some legal experts, including our Seattle City Attorney, for the State of Washington to create a consistent statewide inquest system, I ask that all parties consider allowing the inquest process under Executive Constantine's current Executive Order to proceed at this time.

Here is a relevant excerpt from the [Seattle Times article](#) published June 29, 2020:

"On the heels of the three-year-anniversary of her death, we still don't have any answers," said Katrina Johnson, a cousin of Lyles who was among those who marched on Sunday. "That is extremely traumatizing."

Lyles was shot seven times by two white officers in her home after she called 911 to report a burglary in June 2017. The officers said there was no evidence of a burglary and that she had suddenly threatened them with one or two knives. An inquest to determine the facts and circumstances of Lyles' death has yet to be held. In December 2017, King County Executive Dow Constantine called a halt on inquests because of perceptions that they were held to clear officers and were unfair to families.

Constantine then ordered new inquest rules, [which drew legal challenges](#) from the King County Sheriff's Office and the cities of Kent, Renton, Federal Way and Auburn. Seattle City Attorney Pete Holmes [announced earlier this month](#) that the city of Seattle would drop its challenge. The family of Lyles called for the legal challenges to be dropped.



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Thank you for your consideration. I ask that you respond to my letter at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Alex Pedersen
Seattle City Councilmember, District 4

cc:

Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan,
Seattle Police Chief Carmen Best,
Seattle City Attorney Pete Holmes,
Seattle City Councilmember and Chair of Public Safety & Human Services Committee Lisa Herbold,
Seattle Office of Intergovernmental Relations