

**Date: June 24, 2020**

**To:** Chair Kathryn Harrington  
Washington County Board of Commissioners

**From: Washington County Racial Equity Collaborative**

**Re: Ongoing allegations of misconduct against the Washington County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) and the Washington County District Attorney Office**

Dear Chair Harrington:

As members of the Washington County Racial Equity Collaborative (REC), we are appalled and disappointed by the publicly released video that shows a Washington County Sheriff's Office (WCSO) jail deputy assaulting Albert Molina, a man of Mexican descent. This intolerable behavior, accompanied by a lack of transparency and accountability, is a local example of a national system predicated on the abuse of power, a system that originated from slave patrols, and is sustained by a culture of white supremacy. It is even more disheartening that, had this video remained concealed, no one would have been held accountable for this clear and gross violation of Mr. Molina's rights that took place nearly two years ago.

We applaud your decision to host community listening sessions in response to the public outcry of recent events, and we add our collective voice to myriad others in this correspondence.

The REC endorses the Community Reinvestment Proposal, specifically recommending that an outside qualified independent investigator be hired as soon as possible to investigate the blatant and flagrant misconduct of the jail deputy towards Mr. Molina.

Along with an investigation, we also call on the county to develop a Civil Rights Committee. We believe a Civil Rights Committee, composed of communities of color, will increase transparency and accountability of the WCSO, as well as the Washington County District Attorney's Office. The REC, along with many other community-based organizations in Washington County, is here to assist the county in the formation of such a committee.

Although police violence is nothing new and its history is long and well documented, we demand that our elected leaders do everything in their power to compel the WCSO to stop their violence against our communities now. Law enforcement should serve everyone in our community and be held accountable to our community when it breaks that contract. Furthermore, our safety and justice systems should be fundamentally reformed, rooted in restoration and healing, as opposed to incarceration and permanent stigmatization. It is beyond time to confront and dismantle our system of law enforcement that emboldens the pervasive anti-Black violence and prejudicial treatment of the BIPOC community as demonstrated in Mr. Molina's treatment. We need to move towards community safety that supports a healthy, healed BIPOC community.

As always, the members of the REC wish to be your partners in this work, and your guides and advisors where necessary, both on the proposed Civil Rights Commission and related oversight measures and community engagement. While we are certain that you and your fellow members of the commission find the actions perpetrated upon Mr. Molina as unconscionable as we do, it will require the deliberate, immediate, and unwavering resolve of the entire commission to effect the change in policies necessary to make our county welcoming and safe for all of its residents.

As this morning's news underscores the \$625,000 payout you authorized to the aforementioned Mr. Molina, Washington County Sheriff's Office policies and practices must change. As mentioned in a previous correspondence, full funding of the Chief Equity and Inclusion Officer and staff, along with increased investment in community-based partners like the REC and others, will not only help position the county to be more responsive and fair to its residents and employees, it will also be economically sound: the amount of this single payout for malfeasance by a county employee nearly pays for the five equity office positions for a full year. Doing the right thing for Washington County is not only necessary, but it is also fiscally smart.

Thank you for listening. We know you take these issues seriously, and we would appreciate hearing from you within the next two weeks regarding specific actions you intend to take to address the pervasive institutional, systemic, and cultural racism present within Washington County and, specifically, the Washington County Sheriff's Office.

Sincerely,



Marcus C. Mundy, Executive Director



Glenn Montgomery, Executive Director



Bridget Cooke, Executive Director  
Director



Chi Nguyen, Executive Director



Nathan Teske, Executive



cc: Sheriff Pat Garrett