

Congresswoman Kim Schrier, WA-08
Judiciary Member Day Remarks
October 22, 2021

Thank you Chairman Nadler, Ranking Member Jordan, for hosting this member day today.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify about my priorities as representative of Washington state's 8th congressional district. I want to start by thanking the members of the Judiciary Committee for your work on many of the issues that are most important to me, and to my constituents, including voting rights, farm worker visa reform, and addressing the backlog of green card applicants among others.

I am joining you today to speak specifically to my priorities around public safety and policing reforms. In the last year, our country has had more painful reminders of the racial bias present in all our institutions that carries particularly deadly consequences in law enforcement. Meanwhile, there has been an increase in violent crime and homicide. This year, King County has already seen more gun violence than in all of 2020.

I do not believe in defunding the police, and have never supported any effort to do so. That is wrongheaded and counterproductive to public safety. As we continue to discuss policing reform, it is important to support police departments with the resources they need to do their jobs well.

Over the past year, I have had the privilege to ride with local police officers and hear their perspectives on how to keep our communities safe and build trust with communities of color. I believe that if people and other elected officials would just pause to listen, we could make policing work better for everyone. I ask this Committee to continue to work to address the following priorities of my constituents in the 8th district, and addressed in previous legislation passed by this body.

My proposed amendment to the Commerce, Justice, and Science government funding bill would help police departments pay for **body-worn cameras**, an expensive investment that both law enforcement and their communities strongly support. There would be a special emphasis on smaller departments, which seldom can afford the thousands of dollars needed to purchase body cameras, or the resources and personnel to manage the footage.

The second amendment I put forward in that bill would increase funding that police departments can use to hire **mental health professionals**. During ride-alongs and conversations with police departments throughout my district, I consistently hear from officers that their jobs would be easier if there were more mental health services in our communities. Pairing an officer with a social worker or other trained mental health professional can provide better service to all community members—victims, perpetrators, and people who need help but have not committed any crime.

In addition to these two issues, I would like to highlight several other common sense reforms that remain a priority for my district:

Programs that build **community relationships** with police departments renew trust in these institutions, keeping both officers and community members safer. In Auburn, WA, the police department has created a diverse Police Advisory Committee to provide feedback and recommendations to the Chief. Community-based programs like this help build trust and

understanding, and empower community members to engage with police in ensuring public safety.

And while the vast majority of police officers work hard to serve the community equitably and with compassion, there must be **accountability** for those who don't, whether by gratuitous violence, corruption, or other inappropriate behavior. A national database that tracks these bad actors will help ensure they are not re-hired elsewhere after demonstrating they are unfit to serve.

Finally, as I mentioned, my priority is to ensure that all law enforcement departments have the resources they need to do their jobs well—and one critical component is access to **training**. All departments should have access to training they need in de-escalation, proper use of non-lethal tactics, best practices for engaging with specific populations, and more.

These common-sense reforms will make our communities safer and support our law enforcement professionals to do their best work. Thank you for your leadership and attention to the needs of my District. I yield back the balance of my time.