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Comments *

Below are the comments that I read at the Budget Committee hearing on 3/04/19. I was told to by the Metro Council Clerk to email them so that they were a part of the official record. Since I ran out of time during my 3 minutes of speaking, I want to send my comments in so that they are captured comprehensively for the record. See below:

I'm a senior researcher and I'm here representing the partnership between UL School of Public Health (ULSPH) and the Office for Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods (OSHN) with the support of Dr. Monica Wendel.

I'll start with the Day of Empathy, which is part of a national bipartisan #cut50 Dream Corps initiative to decrease the incarcerated population by 50% over the next 10 years. The day, March 5th, is dedicated to:

- Building empathy with our policymakers to act on EQUITABLE criminal justice reform
- Humanizing HUMANS. I'll say that again, although I REALLY shouldn't have to: HUMANIZING HUMANS through highlighting the lives of the impacted people, their spouses, their children, their parents, their friends, crime survivors, and their communities.

Louisville's celebration of these beautiful people is occurring as we speak at the Louisville Urban League. Additionally, people will be lobbying and advocating for EQUITABLE criminal justice reform tomorrow in Frankfort at the capitol.

Why is this relevant?

Summer of 2012, triple homicide in the West End of Louisville was a primary driver for Louisville to establish the Office for Safe and Healthy Neighborhoods to facilitate VIOLENCE PREVENTION using public health, justice, and equity.

People must organize and ask for empathy while fighting for equity because the United States, the state of Kentucky, the city of Louisville exists in a culture wherein perpetrators of INTERPERSONAL crime and violence are the overarching, yet disproportionate foci of crime prevention funding and damaging labels.

Structural violence occurs when social structures and institutions harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic needs necessary to thrive.

This means that we are operating at the intersection of policies and systems that have been critically examined and deemed grossly harmful to humans as evidenced by Department of Justice reports, academic literature, and most importantly, the PEOPLE! Predatory justice practices, money courts, and racial bias against Black and brown communities are well documented in the name of crime and violence prevention.

OSHN now operates in a space where it significantly contributes to prevention and healing through initiatives like Pivot to Peace and Cure Violence. I have youth who are not dead because they work at the Youth Violence Prevention Research Center. Through the THRIVE program supported by OSHN, there are youth who would otherwise be intentionally pushed to the margins of society if we didn't SPECIFICALLY seek them out and provide OPPORTUNITY.

Sociopolitical Development. Leadership Development. Positive Racial Identity. Community Building. THOSE are critical, evidenced based factors of PREVENTION on which ULSPH and OSHN partner. When city councils and other levels of government don't invest in these elements, you are inherently investing in crime and violence because they increase.

Some of us have gotten word that there are council members who are conspiring to DEFUND OSHN. That's appalling. For those of you who create structurally violent policies and make uninformed community-level decisions that are based on a personal paradigm that aligns with the culture of privilege and oppression and not racial equity impact assessments, YOU are structural violence perpetrators and YOU will be charged with murder...the blood of our beloved community members will be on your hands. For those of you who are advocates for prevention and humane ways of creating a community where we ALL have opportunities to thrive, thank you. Please influence your colleagues. Act with equity, safety, empathy, and humanity at the forefront of your consciousness. DO NOT CUT FUNDING FROM OSHN.