



Spokane County
WASHINGTON



May 2, 2023

Governor Inslee and State Legislators,

Following the legislature's inability to pass a law dealing with drug use and possession, we are requesting that a special legislative session is called to pass a statewide law addressing the *Blake* decision before the July 1, 2023 expiration of the current possession law.

The Legislature should adopt a policy in-line with the framework of Senate Bill 5536, which had bipartisan support in the Senate and would have been an effective way to address this issue. Senate Bill 5536 also took into account guidance from law enforcement and community leaders, as well as behavioral health and substance use/addiction experts. While each of us may not agree with this bill in its entirety, it represents a reasonable compromise to begin addressing a deeply complex issue.

A statewide solution should make it a gross misdemeanor for knowingly possessing dangerous, illicit drugs. This statewide solution also should fund an increased emphasis on treatment programs that offer safe diversion, behavioral health services, and therapeutic court models to assist individuals working to recover from drug addiction.

Through our duties as the Spokane County Commissioners, Prosecuting Attorney, and Sheriff we are already preparing options for a local ordinance to regulate dangerous drugs in our community. However, a statewide solution is needed to establish clarity for citizens and law enforcement to prevent a confusing patchwork of differing city and county laws.


We recognize the proliferation of dangerous drugs in our communities (including fentanyl, methamphetamine, and heroin) damages the public health, safety, and welfare of our citizens.

We need the state legislature to address this crisis. Substance misuse is getting worse, and people are going to continue dying from drug-related causes. The de-facto legalization of dangerous drugs, due to the state's stalled effort to adopt legislation in response to the *Blake* decision, is unacceptable. We can't wait another year to fix this problem.

Thank you for your consideration,



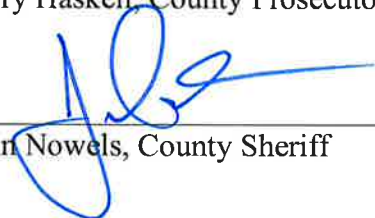
Mary L. Kuney, Chair



Larry Haskell, County Prosecutor



Josh Kerns, Vice-Chair



John Nowels, County Sheriff



Al French, Commissioner



Amber Waldref, Commissioner



Chris Jordan, Commissioner