



**City of Seattle**

Mayor Bruce Harrell

## Mayor Harrell Consent Decree Statement

### **Mayor Harrell's statement to the Court as prepared**

Thank you, Judge Robart, for your dedication to this matter and for the opportunity to address the Court today on this important topic.

While Chief Barnes will provide some of the statistics and data around how SPD has changed, I want to put this in perspective. When I was first elected to the City Council in 2007, effective public safety was among my highest priorities, as it remains today as mayor.

Rooted in my own experience as an African American man, true public safety from our police department requires not just swift response times, strong investigations, and a well-staffed department, but also culturally competent, community-based, accountable policing.

That's why, as a Councilmember, I championed body cameras and a first-of-its-kind bias-free policing law. It's also why I was one of the strongest early advocates for the consent decree.

While some saw the consent decree as a condemnation of our department, I welcomed it as a chance – an *opportunity* – for our department to better serve the public.

I believe that reform and continuous improvement are built into the Seattle Police Department's DNA. That said, the consent decree helped to operationalize this spirit of innovation and accountability.

Since the implementation of the consent decree in 2012, Seattle and our police service have comprehensively changed how we police – one step at a time.



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From tactical changes that have significantly reduced our use of force to building out one of the strongest and most robust accountability systems in the country: This is a different department than it was in 2012, it's a different department than it was in 2020, and I know it will be a different department in the years to come as we strive for continuous improvement.

As we've seen over the last 13 years, there will be setbacks. But what separates a stagnant department from a learning, growing organization is seizing those opportunities to get better. And I believe that through this process, SPD is better equipped to make the most of these moments.

There are too many people who have played a role in this transformation to thank, but I do want to express my gratitude to a few people for their hard work helping us get here.

Former Chief Kathleen O'Toole – thank you for your leadership as a chief who embraced the opportunity for the department to improve under the Consent Decree. And Chief Shon Barnes, thank you, for bringing that same approach.

Former Assistant Chief Lesley Cordner and former Chief Strategy Officer Chris Fisher – thank you for your commitment to making real the vision for reform we shared back in 2012. My thanks to Becca Boatright and Brian Maxey for their consistent leadership through the years.

To all the staff at SPD, from civilians, patrol officers and detectives up the ranks to sergeants, lieutenants, and captains – thank you. It's your work, day in and day out, that has allowed us to reach this point.

I appreciate and am grateful for the work of our City Attorneys, including former City Attorney Pete Holmes and current City Attorney Ann Davison.



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And thank you to the monitoring team. Last week, we lost a national leader in reform in Merrick Bobb. We are honoring Merrick's legacy of forward-looking innovation in this Court today.

In 2023, over a decade after the implementation of the consent decree, we were grateful, Judge Robart, for your decision to terminate most provisions of the consent decree. Today, we are here to respectfully request the final closure of this matter.

Not because the work is over, but because this effort has equipped SPD and the City with the tools to continue on this path of growth. Returning control of our police department to the people of Seattle is the next, and most appropriate step, toward the future of our police service. And that's because the police can be most effective when they have the trust and confidence of the people they serve.

Barry Friedman, professor of law at New York University and the director of the *Policing Project*, said it well: "Democratic policing is the idea that the people should take responsibility for policing, as they do for the rest of their government, and that police agencies should be responsive to the people's will."

Your honor, we agree with Professor Friedman and welcome the opportunity to let the people of Seattle shape how we police our beloved city.

Thank you.