



HUY

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Pronounced "hoyt," Huy means "see you again/we never say goodbye" in the Coast Salish language.

December 5, 2017

VIA EMAIL

King County Executive Dow Constantine & King County Council
King County Chinook Building
401 5th Ave., Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104

Dear Executive Constantine and Council Members:

We write to encourage King County to end solitary confinement for our incarcerated youth. As you know some teenagers being tried as adults have been held at the Maleng Regional Justice Center have been held in isolation. We ask that you ban isolation for youth offenders in King County and pursue alternatives that will not have a devastating psychological impact on Native American youth.

We are a Seattle-based non-profit that provides economic, educational, rehabilitative and religious support for Native American, Alaska Native and Native Hawaiian prisoners, chiefly those Natives imprisoned in the Washington State prisons and local jails. In the Coast Salish language, Huy, pronounced "hoyt," means: "See you again/we never say goodbye."

Native youth are the most vulnerable group of children in the United States. Over a quarter of Indian children live in poverty. Native youth graduate from high school at a rate 17 percent lower than the national average, and are more than twice as likely to die as their non-Native peers. Native youth suffer *the* highest juvenile suicide rate in the country, at more than double rate for the Caucasian youth suicide. Native youth experience PTSD at a rate of 22 percent—triple that of the general population.

Making such horrible realities even worse, Native American youth are 30 percent more likely than Caucasian youth to be referred to juvenile court than have charges dropped, which results in their early entry into the system—perhaps without return. In our experience, local Native youth are infrequently offered opportunities for diversion.

Solitary confinement can have a devastating impact on an already vulnerable population, like our local Native youth. Studies have shown that solitary confinement exacerbates existing mental illnesses in those who are confined, leading to depression, alienation, withdrawal and the potential for violent behavior. These byproducts will only serve to ensure that our youth return to the corrections system time and time again.

Solitary confinement also creates new behavioral problems instead of fixing any existing behavioral issues. Inmates in solitary confinement also are more likely to engage in self wounding, and are more likely to commit suicide as well. One of the aims of the criminal justice system in King County should be to rehabilitate youth who make mistakes. Solitary confinement for youth undercuts this goal by taking a vulnerable young person and inflicting them with a huge amount of emotional stress and mental harm—for absolutely no gain of any sort.

Board of Advisors:

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We applaud Vice Chairman Rod Dembowski's leadership on this issue. We ask that the rest of the King County Council and King County Executive Constantine follow suit and end solitary confinement for youth under any circumstances in King County.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critically important matter.

Very truly yours,



Gabriel S. Galanda
Chairman, Huy Board of Advisors

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