



Increase fiscal tools and resources to address public safety and criminal justice challenges.

Background:

Public safety is a core responsibility of city government. In fact, cities employ the most law enforcement officers in Washington. Our communities are safer places to live, learn, work, and play thanks to high-quality public safety services delivered by local law enforcement.

Cities are facing historic vacancies in law enforcement and are struggling to recruit and retain police officers. In addition, overall concerns about juvenile crime, drug offenses, gun violence, and property crime remain high, and these cases place ongoing strain on the criminal justice system.



Communities need the criminal justice system to function effectively and have adequate resources for: law enforcement, local courts, prosecutors, indigent defense, jails, and treatment and diversion programs. As cities work to create and maintain professional, community-oriented police departments, it will take strong partnership from the state to improve public safety.

Strong cities need:

- **Increased funding to meet local public safety needs**, including additional direct state funding and enhanced local public safety sales tax, allowing for councilmanic implementation.
- **Support for efforts to prevent and address juvenile crime**, including expansion of juvenile behavioral health treatment capacity and state correctional capacity.
- **Enhanced officer training through continued state funding** for 100% of Basic Law Enforcement Academy (BLEA) costs and for the expansion of existing—and creation of new—regional BLEA academies.
- **Replacement of the outdated Criminal Justice Training Center (CJTC) main facility.**
- **Additional direct state funding for public safety**, including increasing the state's contribution to the Municipal Criminal Justice Assistance Account.
- **Support for additional programs to reduce gun violence** in our communities and enforce unlawful possession of firearms.
- **Support for programs designed to improve law enforcement retention**, such as state-supported law enforcement officer wellness and injury prevention programs.

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With one-third of officers eligible or nearly eligible to retire, cities will continue to face challenges to meet the public safety needs of our communities.



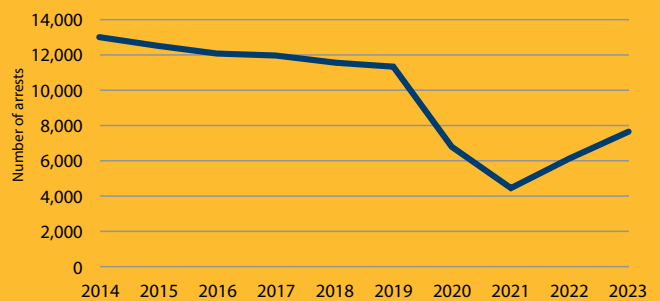
Source: Washington Dept. of Retirement Systems, 2023

Changes in drug possession laws following the *Blake* decision have led to an increase in drug related charges, creating new demands on the criminal justice system. Now that these charges are misdemeanors they have a greater impact on the municipal criminal justice system. Communities are also concerned about a steep increase in juvenile crime coming out of the pandemic that is a worrisome trend for many reasons, but in particular because of the serious nature of the crimes being committed by youth.

Retention of officers is also an ongoing concern and an important aspect of meeting public safety needs. As a part of those efforts, we must continue to focus more resources on officer wellness and well-being to protect both their physical and mental health.

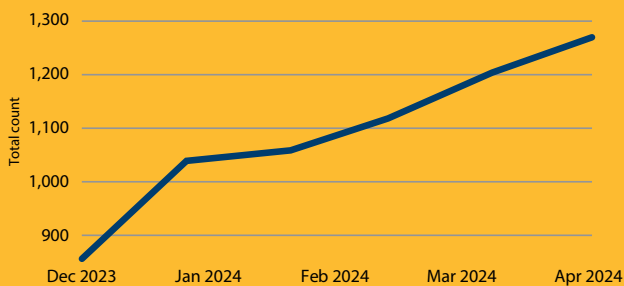
Without a well-resourced system, we will continue to experience a revolving door in the criminal justice system that doesn't consistently address public safety issues and justice for victims, nor does it provide offenders with a pathway towards rehabilitation.

Juvenile arrests in Washington, 2014-2023



Source: WASPC's Crime in Washington Annual Reports, 2014-2023

Statewide drug possession and public use charges over a 6-month period



Over a 6-month period, the number of charges for possession and public use increased by a total of 49%

Source: Administrative Office of the Courts

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