

October 12, 2023

Cowlitz County Commissioners:
Dennis Weber, Arne Mortensen, Rick Dahl

Dear Commissioners Weber, Mortensen and Dahl,

The Mayors of Cowlitz County understand the County collects 1/10 of 1% sales tax for chemical dependency, mental health treatment and therapeutic courts. This dedicated revenue specifically supports treatment for inmates with mental health disorders and opioid addiction in the County Corrections Department, and funds four mental health professionals to augment the Sheriff's Office as co-responders for crisis calls for service.

With the recent Washington State legislation changes in the Blake decision, making simple drug possession a gross misdemeanor, there is an essential need for a drug court at the Cowlitz County District Court level. Incarceration of individuals for drug crimes does not solve the issue, nor does it resolve addiction. Cities within Cowlitz County rely on drug court and other associated treatment programs funded by the sales tax, to help those citizens in our community that suffer with mental health and/or substance abuse disorders. Without these programs, individuals suffering with addiction will likely reoffend and are less likely to progress on a path to wellness.

Police chiefs and law enforcement officers, mental health professionals, managers, elected officials, judges, and citizens of Cowlitz County support programs funded by the sales tax and recognize the sustained benefits and demonstrated success of our therapeutic courts.

The Mayors of Cowlitz County see an incredible and increasing need for the funding created by the 1/10 of 1% sales tax, which provides a utility for the wellness of citizens in need in our cities.

Please continue this sales tax, as it is an essential and critical component and utility to restoring wellness to our communities.

Respectfully,

MaryAlice Wallis, Mayor

Cc: Mayor Mike Karnofski- Kelso
Mayor Paul Helenberg- Castle Rock

Mayor Will Finn- Woodland
Mayor Mike Reuter- Kalama