

**From:** [Kimberly Ambrose](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Committee Assistants \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Youth Right to Counsel Ordinance  
**Date:** Wednesday, July 22, 2020 8:19:32 AM

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Dear Councilmembers:

I have worked in and around the juvenile, criminal and child welfare systems in King County for the past 25 years as an attorney, a law professor, and director of the UW Law School's Race and Justice Clinic. I am the past chair of the Public Defense Advisory Board and currently serve as the member of the Board representing juvenile justice issues. I teach Juvenile Justice, Race and the Law and Professional Responsibility at the University of Washington School of Law and serve on the Juvenile Justice Subcommittee of the Washington State Minority and Justice Committee. I also serve on the WSBA Council on Public Defense. I have spent years on various task forces, committees and boards as an advocate for young people, particularly young people of color who are disproportionately policed, prosecuted and imprisoned.

I strongly support this common sense ordinance that will protect young people who interact with King County law enforcement. A child's decision to waive an important constitutional right that may subject them to being pulled into a system that has the potential to impact them for the rest of their lives requires that they have accurate information about this decision. I have read too many police reports where it is absolutely clear that young people do not understand what their rights are and what it means to waive those rights. For many years, my law students and I have been doing legal workshops for girls in detention. We frequently hear from them directly about how they misunderstood their rights and felt that they were required to talk to the police without having support from anyone, let alone legal advice.

Many children of privilege have parents who are attorneys or access to attorneys — and when these children are questioned by the police we often see adults stepping in on their behalf and assisting them. ALL children should have access to legal information during critical interactions with law enforcement.

I am heartened by the County's efforts to get to zero youth detention. I am saddened that while the current youth detention population is low it is vastly made up of black and brown children. We can do better. This is a step.

Thank you for your consideration of this important matter.

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(In personal capacity)