



July 18, 2020

Dear King County Councilmembers and Seattle City Councilmembers,

I am the elected District Attorney of San Francisco and my mission is to make our city safer and more just for all. To achieve this, we must build a justice system that recognizes the rights of all individuals in our community—a system that our community can trust.

That is why I'm pleased that SB 395, known locally as the "Jeff Adachi Youth Rights Ordinance," was passed unanimously last year by our Board of Supervisors. That Ordinance, San Francisco Administrative Code §96C, protects youth rights by ensuring that youth speak with a lawyer before officers can conduct a custodial interrogation. This protection is essential for three reasons: first, youth brains are still developing and young people often do not understand their rights or the consequences of waiving them. Second, the significant power differential between youth— especially Black, Indigenous and Youth of Color -- and armed police officers makes it hard for young people to assert their rights or knowingly and voluntarily waive them. Third, it is a critical part of building trust between law enforcement and our communities.

Existing case law and constitutional provisions do not adequately protect the rights of youth, especially those youth experiencing poverty or who are Black, Indigenous and Youth of Color. That anachronistic case law largely ignores what the science tells us about developing brains and pretends that young people and law enforcement are on equal footing in any interaction. The "Jeff Adachi Youth Rights Ordinance" rectifies this problem by considering both the brain science and the power dynamics between youth and law enforcement interaction. The Ordinance makes young people's constitutional rights meaningful by connecting them to a lawyer who can help them understand these rights. The Ordinance, now fully implemented in San Francisco, makes our community safer and has not diminished my office's ability to prosecute serious and violent crimes.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Chesa Boudin".

Chesa Boudin
District Attorney