

**From:** [Holland, Paul](#)  
**To:** [KCC - Committee Assistants \(Email Group\)](#)  
**Subject:** Public Comment on Youth Right to Counsel Ordinance  
**Date:** Tuesday, July 21, 2020 4:38:34 PM

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Members of the Law and Justice Committee,

I submit these comments in support of the Youth Right to Counsel Ordinance.

Founded on solid science and attuned to the lived experience of youth of color, this ordinance would have a significant and beneficial impact on the fairness of the administration of justice in the county.

I have represented youth involved in the legal system for thirty years, in cities across the country, with the last fifteen years here in Seattle. I entered this field of advocacy precisely because it was obvious and essential that youth needed better, more meaningful advocacy than was the norm when I started doing this work.

The fields of youth advocacy and juvenile justice have changed in recent decades, in many ways for the better. We are smarter about the use of alternatives to prosecution and detention, but much less has been done to promote equity at the front end, the most important stage, i.e., the interaction between youth and law enforcement. As a result, too many youths find themselves at a stark disadvantage, frequently surrendering important rights due to a mixture of poor adolescent decisionmaking abilities and a simple and undeniable imbalance of power.

The Youth Right to Counsel ordinance would directly address these concerns, ensuring that youth have what the United States Supreme Court has referred to as "the guiding hand of counsel" at these critical moments. Constrained by the presence (or even the guarantee) of counsel, law enforcement would not be able to mislead or overwhelm youth into forgoing their constitutional protections - and thus compromising their own long-term interests-- due to the actual and perceived pressures of the moment.

My schedule prevents me from attending tomorrow's hearing, but I hope the Committee finds these comments helpful. Thank you for considering them.

(Please note that I submit these comments in my individual capacity and not on behalf of Seattle University. I include my affiliation below for purposes of identification only).

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