

# Save our Health Department

## Background:

On Dec 1, Pierce County Council Chair Doug Richardson scheduled [Ordinance 2020-136](#) for a hearing sponsored originally by him and for unknown reasons changed to Council Member Pam Roach.

Ordinance 2020-136 would dismantle the Tacoma Pierce County Health Department, with an intent to consolidate it as a regular department of Pierce County under authority of the County Executive and County Council only. This is a vast departure from the long-standing, independent Public Health Department, jointly governed by cities, towns, Pierce County and a medical professional - thus politicizing our local Health Department. This ordinance came as a surprise to the Board of Health, The Health Department, and to their Tacoma partners. If passed, reversal is likely impossible.

**The politically-driven dismantling of our public health department during this roaring pandemic is reckless and dangerous.**

**Pierce County Council is scheduled to hear this bill in the Rules Committee on Monday, December 7 and the full Council for a final vote on December 15, 2020. We need your help to call on the County Council and the Executive to stop this action.**

## How you can help stop this dangerous legislation:

- **Email** County Council Members and Bruce Dammeier starting **immediately through December 15** - <https://www.co.pierce.wa.us/3301/Council-Contact-Information> [pcexecutive@piercecountywa.gov](mailto:pcexecutive@piercecountywa.gov)
- **Attend County Council Zoom meetings to testify**
  - Rules Committee Meeting, **Monday, December 7, 10 AM**
  - County Council Meeting, **Tuesday, December 8, 3 PM** - at the end of the meeting during public forum you may comment on anything of county business
  - County Council Meeting, **Tuesday, December 15, 3 PM** - currently scheduled vote on the proposal
- **Join us!** Informational Picket being organized for Tuesday, December 8, 8 - 10 am outside the Yakima Avenue-side entrance to the County-City Building. The public is highly encouraged to attend. Details here: <https://fb.me/e/16szYEpQv>.

**Primary message (If you are only going to say one thing): Stop the politically-driven dismantling of our public health department during this roaring pandemic - it is reckless and dangerous.**

## Key Messages (When you are going to say more)

- **We need our public health workers focused on the pandemic, not politics.** Even as we're seeing light at the end of the tunnel, we have to get through what might be our darkest hour first. This debate is a divisive distraction at the exact moment we all need to pull together and pull through.

- **This 11th hour surprise move weakens our efforts rather than strengthens them. It will do more harm than good at this precarious hour.** At a time that partnership and collaboration is so essential, this dissolves and weakens the ability for our county and city leaders to work with medical providers, educators, parents, workers and employers.
- **We are all exhausted and ready for this pandemic to end. But this simply adds another sordid chapter to this very long saga.** Once we're through this pandemic, we'll all have time to reflect on how we can improve our public health and health care systems. This move has ramifications for everything from drinking water and drug treatment and maternal health. This is a significant dissolution and reorganization of a half-century-old partnership that deserves more than one week of discussion.

### **Call to Action**

- We urge the Pierce County Executive and County Council to postpone further policy discussion and legislative action on this matter until such a time that a full analysis and robust stakeholder engagement can be completed.
- We request that County officials reach out to cities and towns, the medical community, educators, and other vital stakeholders to fully vet the implications of the decision to dissolve the Tacoma-Pierce County Health Department *prior* to considering any legislation.