



TACOMA PIERCE COUNTY COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS

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To the City Manager, Mayor, and Tacoma City Council,
September 7, 2026

The Tacoma Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness is writing to express strong support for the HOPE Team and deep concern regarding the City Manager's recommendation to eliminate this vital program by the end of 2026. While we recognize that the City Council will make the final decision in November, the recommendation itself signals a troubling step backward for non-police mental health crisis response in Tacoma.

Since its inception, the HOPE Team has operated under significant structural constraints. City leadership restricted its budget and limited its operational independence by requiring Fire and Police to control dispatch. Without the ability to be contacted directly by the community, the team's reach and overall effectiveness has been unnecessarily throttled. These operational limitations should be corrected, not used as justification for dismantling the program.

The need for the HOPE Team's specialized services is greater than ever. Tacoma residents face rising costs of living and increasing stress from complex national and local challenges affecting vulnerable populations—including immigrants, transgender individuals, and people with disabilities. At a time when our community urgently needs accessible, mental health-focused crisis intervention, eliminating the HOPE Team removes a critical resource designed to de-escalate crises and connect residents to compassionate care.

Many of us have witnessed situations where a behavioral health-trained team—rather than law enforcement—would have prevented trauma and reduced harm. Instead of eliminating the HOPE Team, Tacoma should strengthen it, allow it to operate and dispatch independently, and follow best practices in crisis intervention. Community members deserve a reliable, non-police option during a mental health emergency.

We urge the City Council to reject the recommendation to cut this program and instead invest in the structural improvements the HOPE Team needs to thrive.

Sincerely

Tacoma/Pierce County Coalition to End Homelessness