

**VIA EMAIL**

May 23, 2019

Hon. Mike Farnworth  
Minister of Public Safety and Solicitor General  
Room 128 Parliament Buildings  
Victoria, BC V8V 1X4

Attn: Hon. Mike Farnworth

Dear Minister Farnworth,

**Re: Opposition to the *Community Safety Act***

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We write to you on behalf of all signatories to this letter urging you not to pass Bill 13 and not to bring the *Community Safety Act* of 2013 into effect. Many of the groups and individuals represented are particularly focused on the safety of Indigenous women and girls, who remain particularly vulnerable to the negative effects of state action. Vulnerable people tend to face intersecting problems related to housing, family preservation, mental health, addictions, and interactions with the criminal justice system. We are a broad coalition of voices with experience—including lived experience—of these matters and how government initiatives can unintentionally imperil British Columbians.

It is for these reasons that we write to express our deep concern about your government's introduction of Bill 13, the *Community Safety Amendment Act*, and the stated intention to implement the legislation by the end of 2019. We do not doubt that the motivation behind this legislation is good and that you are attempting to provide more tools to enhance the safety of all community members, including the most marginalized.

However, we strongly believe that the very people that you are trying to protect are the ones that will be most disadvantaged by the *Community Safety Act*. While we have both procedural and substantive worries about the legislation, all of them amount to this single, primary concern.

Not only does the legislation allow a person's previous criminal convictions—no matter how long ago—to be used in court as “proof” that a person is still in a criminal organization or is involved in certain activities, but it will also allow a court to draw adverse inferences about a person even in the context of someone who was found to not be criminally responsible on account of a mental disorder.

We think that existing laws—with much better procedural safeguards—should be used where criminal activities are adversely affecting others. The *Community Safety Act* would circumvent these laws and put people and families at risk of losing their housing and being separated from one another, all without access to any legal aid.

If enacted, the law will provide a major disincentive to British Columbians to provide support and shelter to their friends and family who may be struggling with addiction or have recently been released from incarceration. We know that similar legislation in other provinces has been used to target households in which all members are law-abiding except for one.

Given that this legislation will undermine the safety and well-being of the most disadvantaged people in our communities, we urge you not to pass Bill 13 and not to bring the *Community Safety Act* of 2013 into effect. Abandoning the law will demonstrate to British Columbians that you value the voices of the most vulnerable, especially

Indigenous women and girls, and that you do not intend to exacerbate the struggle that too many people already face in finding safe housing and a supportive community.

Sincerely,

Myrna Cranmer  
Christina Coad, JD  
Lorelei Williams

Atira Women's Resource Society  
BC Assembly of First Nations  
BC Civil Liberties Association  
Downtown Eastside Women's Centre  
First United  
Pivot Legal Society  
Sanctuary Health  
Tenant Resource & Advisory Centre  
Together Against Poverty Society  
Union of BC Indian Chiefs  
Union Gospel Mission  
West Coast LEAF

cc: Premier John Horgan, Minister of Justice and Attorney-General <premier@gov.bc>  
Shane Simpson, Minister of Social Development and Poverty Reduction  
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Selina Robinson, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing <selina.robinson.mla@leg.bc.ca>  
Judy Darcy, Minister of Minister of Mental Health and Addictions <judy.darcy.mla@leg.bc.ca>