

Public Safety and Criminal Justice Reform

ASWWU recognizes two interconnected issues: America's criminal justice system is broken and Bellingham has a homelessness crisis. Mass incarceration disproportionately affects people of color and low-income people in America. The US incarcerates five times as many people as compared to the rest of the world. We encourage the city to take actions to reform our broken criminal justice system and protect the most vulnerable in our community. Furthermore, we encourage the city to innovate policy and fund programs that disrupt the root problems: white supremacy, patriarchy, lack of living wage jobs, lack of affordable housing, and social isolation.

ASWWU Urges Policymakers to:

- Develop a robust program to provide alternatives to incarceration, similar to the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program built by a partnership between King County and City of Seattle. LEAD in Seattle reduced recidivism by 25%. We encourage Bellingham to work the county, tribes, neighboring cities, and the public, especially people of color and low-income people, to design and implement a similar program here.
 - Model Program: [City of Seattle, WA & King County, Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion](#)
- Reform our unfair bail system that wastes taxpayer money on pre-trial detention and harms the lives of detainees by implementing a Supervised Bail Release Program. The majority of people in our jail can't afford bail, they are simply there because they are poor.
 - Model Program: [New York City, NY, Supervised Bail Release Program](#)
- Vote against any policies that increase mass incarceration in Bellingham or Whatcom County, such as the proposed mega jail expansion. Bellingham's recent 20% reduction in incarceration is promising; we should not waste precious taxpayer dollars funding increased incarceration. Instead, fix and improve existing jail facilities.
- Stop the inhumane practice of sweeping out homeless encampments and parks when vulnerable people have no housing to go to. Instead of wasting taxpayer dollars on sweeps, provide sanitary services to homeless encampments and fund housing-first models.
- Improve collaboration with Whatcom County on safe-injection sites. Heroin and other opioids are public health crises that require attention and best practices to reduce harm.
 - Model Program: [City of Vancouver, BC, Supervised Injection Sites](#)
- Improve the quality of lighting in several locations identified as unsafe by students: Lincoln Creek, Bill McDonald, Humboldt St between Lakeway and Samish. Walking is a primary mode of transportation for many students who live near campus, the poorly lit areas near WWU raise a significant challenge. Lack of adequate lighting creates an environment of fear and insecurity.