

February, 2022

Dear Senators, Representatives

As the Mayor of Albuquerque, and as your former colleague in the state Senate, I am writing to you to ask for your support on Metro Crime Initiative legislation and investments because our communities are demanding action on crime, and we need your help. Crime is, far and away, the most urgent challenge that we face. We know this because it's on the news every hour, discussed in homes every night, and in the minds of victims of violence forever.

The state's criminal justice system is fundamentally broken, and there is no single person or government that can fix it alone. Our State deserves more than another round of the blame game; we deserve and demand solutions. It is way past time for each piece of the system to take responsibility and agree that we each have to do our part to make it work. That's why nine months ago, I convened the Metro Crime Initiative, bringing together leaders from across the criminal justice system, including legislators from both chambers. It produced 40 action items across jurisdictions to repair this failed system.

While not everyone agreed on every solution, there was broad consensus on a few basic principles. First, we must rebuild the dismantled behavioral health system. Second, we must close the revolving door by fully funding our courts at every level, and fixing the systems that are supposed to stop criminals from committing new crimes between arrest and conviction. Finally, we need to protect our communities from the epidemic of gun violence. Today we are supporting a package of public safety legislation and investments that can help accomplish these Metro Crime Initiative guiding principles.

I know it can be tempting to push this problem back to the Duke City. But our State is at its best when we step up to help each other. I remember pleas from McKinley for help with substance treatment, from Vegas to help build the Bradner Dam, or from Carlsbad to help repair the Sink hole. Today, there is no excuse for ignoring the 900 thousand New Mexicans who call the Albuquerque metro area home. And the reality is that crime is not just an Albuquerque issue. Violent crime is indisputably a statewide problem with at

least twenty communities in our state experiencing a rise of violence over the past decade.

The State is fundamentally responsible for key aspects of the criminal justice system, including defining which crimes we take seriously and funding the courts, the prosecutors, the public defenders, the detention centers, and behavioral health and addiction treatment. Albuquerque does not write its own criminal code or make rules for its judges. These are the areas where you can provide tangible, immediate help.

There are many ways you can demonstrate action on crime this session. I know each of you cares about reducing crime, but I also know each of us has a responsibility for action. Whether your family lives in Albuquerque, you represent Albuquerque, or you go our university, airport, and hospitals; you are part of the Albuquerque community. New Mexico rises and falls with the Duke City, and today, we need your help.

The larger issue for this session is not whether this particular measure will pass. It is not whether people can find reasons to stall various crime bills. It is not about commissioning studies or waiting for a longer session or more data to take action. The question we must all answer at the end of this session is: What is it that we will point to, collectively, that was accomplished to make our communities safer and help stop the violence? At a minimum, if we can answer that question, I know we will have honored what the public is demanding from us for today.

Respectfully submitted,

Tim M. Keller
Mayor of Albuquerque.