



**January 20, 2022**

To: Mayor Wheeler, Commissioner Mingus Mapps, Bureau of Emergency Communications & Portland Police

CC: Commissioner Hardesty, Commissioner Rubio, Commissioner Ryan, Mike Meyers & Kimberly Branam

Dear Mayor Wheeler, Commissioner Mingus Mapps, Bureau of Emergency Communications & Portland Police:

The Central Eastside Industrial Council is the business association for the Central Eastside. With over 1,300 businesses the Central Eastside is a major employment area for the city. Many of these businesses provide median wage manufacturing and distribution jobs, which are key in promoting income equality and alleviating poverty in our region.

Businesses in our district are being confronted with an unprecedented number of violent incidents from people going through behavioral health crises. We've had reports of employees and patrons being verbally aggressed, punched, and threatened with violence. Businesses are still struggling to keep their doors open, and many are operating with limited staff, which is putting an extreme strain on their ability to remain open.

We urge the City to consider the following recommendations in order to ensure that our front-facing businesses, some of the hardest hit by the pandemic, can keep their doors open:

- **Communicate clearly about expected response times and follow up for emergency and non-emergency dispatch**
  - Callers are experiencing historically long hold times when calling emergency and non-emergency. When they are able to get through (we have heard reports of up 15 minutes for 911), they are often told it could take hours for a response. We've had many reports that callers have been told that someone has been dispatched, but no one shows up, or that 911 hasn't followed up on dropped calls. For our businesses to feel safer and equipped to handle urgent situations, our emergency response system needs to clearly explain to the public what to expect in terms of response and follow-up.
  
- **Funding for businesses dealing with increased behavioral health issues**
  - Businesses across Portland are operating with limited staff and trying to navigate staying open with COVID-19. In this last fall BMP process, there was no direct funding support for small businesses. We ask for direct financial support to



front-facing businesses to fund more staff with special training to help de-escalate these types of situations.

We appreciate all the work the City has done to support businesses throughout this COVID-19 crisis. Your support is critical in keeping our district's storefronts alive and our main streets thriving.

Thank you for your consideration,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kate Merrill". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "K".

Kate Merrill  
Executive Director  
Central Eastside Industrial Council

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Eric Cress". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "E".

Eric Cress  
Board of Directors President  
Central Eastside Industrial Council