

Dear Councilmembers,

We are writing to strongly oppose Ordinance 260076 which would create the Department of Justice and Community Intervention, and the decision to move REACH KC to this new department.

REACH is a revolutionary program administered by the Health Department since 2024. During its pilot year, REACH has served over 300+ clients, provided light touch services, and has helped connect community members along the Prospect Corridor with access to identification, transportation, emergency shelter placement, food and clothing assistance, and social services enrollment and application.

Ordinance 240285, which passed and created REACH in 2024, specifically directed the Health Department to administer mobile community response services for individuals in crisis or with quality-of-life concerns because of issues related to mental health, substance abuse, or houselessness – all of which are Public Health concerns. During public testimony, community members cautioned the council of moving this program into the Department of Corrections, stating that the Health Department was the best equipped department for a program which would revolutionize how the city approached alternatives to incarceration through a public health lens.

The principal vision of REACH KC is to provide alternatives to incarceration and to bring a holistic approach to issues impacting those most vulnerable and marginalized in Kansas City. Moving these programs into a “Department of Justice and Community Intervention” alongside corrections and incarceration is contrary to the very reason these programs were created – to be an alternative to incarceration. This move will give unfettered access to client data, influence over program functions, and potential budget allocations to the very system that incarcerates vulnerable community members.

In a time when the federal government is actively attacking our neighbors and most marginalized in our community, this City Council must be a beacon of hope and find ways to support the people of Kansas City. By removing REACH KC, Aim4Peace, and other vital resources from the Health Department, we are stripping away agency from those who are experts on public health, and are closely mirroring the federal government’s own dismantling of federal health programs such as the CDC, Vaccination Programs, and the Department of Health and Human Services as a whole.

We strongly urge you to reconsider any “YES” votes and vote “NO” on Ordinance 260076.

Decarcerate KC