



**King County**

**Reagan Dunn**

Councilmember, District 9

**Metropolitan King County Council**

June 11, 2024

King County Auditor Kymber Waltmunson  
King County Auditor's Office  
King County Courthouse  
516 Third Avenue, Room W-1033  
Seattle, WA 98104

***Re: Financial and Performance Audit of the Restorative Community Pathways Program***

Dear King County Auditor Waltmunson:

On May 18, 2024, a juvenile shot a woman to death in Shoreline after he threatened two teenage girls with a gun and the victim attempted to intervene. While this juvenile had no official criminal history, charging documents revealed to the public that this juvenile had previously in 2021 been arrested for brandishing a gun at school and was sent to the diversion program Restorative Community Pathways (RCP). It is only through court filings did we learn that this juvenile offender never engaged in RCP programming but was neither sent to an alternative diversion program nor charged with a crime.

This alarming situation not only highlights the tragedy that can occur when the criminal justice system fails to provide meaningful intervention in juvenile cases, but it also points to loopholes within our juvenile justice system, specifically within Restorative Community Pathways, that fail to deliver meaningful interventions for juvenile offenders. There desperately needs to be improved transparency, accountability, and oversight of this controversial program. To this end, I am formally requesting that you perform an audit of Restorative Community Pathways to bring to light the systemic deficiencies that have led to such tragedies as the one previously described.

Since Restorative Community Pathways was created in November 2021, I have been outspoken about how I believe this controversial program needs more oversight and scrutiny. There has also been excellent local reporting that has done much to bring to light very concerning problems with Restorative Community Pathways, including:

- [\*Controversial county effort to divert youth criminal cases to community groups not meeting goals\*](#), Ann Dornfeld, *KUOW* (May 17, 2024)
- [\*King County's juvenile diversion programs are a mess. Time for a reset.\*](#) The Seattle Times Editorial Board, *The Seattle Times*, (May 5, 2023)
- [\*King County gave millions to 'No New Youth Jail' activists to help kids — and then looked away.\*](#) *Ann Dornfeld*, *KUOW* (April 26, 2023)

Restorative Community Pathways' practices are resulting in too many juvenile offenders falling through the cracks. Of the referrals that are sent to Restorative Community Pathways, over one-third of cases are returned to the PAO because the community organizations could not locate the juvenile or the juvenile's family refused to work with Restorative Community Pathways. Because these returns to the PAO are greatly delayed, often happening 6-12 months or more after the initial offense, half of the cases reviewed for filing are being simply let go. This is far different than court-monitored diversions, where a judge has oversight, there are requirements, and all parties work together toward resolution.

The continued challenges of the program raise the question of could we be better providing diversion services with the dollars we are expending. Since 2021, King County has allocated \$16 million to Restorative Community Pathways. Yet, RCP has had performance issues, serving far fewer juveniles than the county intended. In 2023, it enrolled only 170 youths referred by prosecutors, though the county planned to refer 400 to 600 cases to RCP. As of December 2023, only 181 of youth have completed the program since it was started in 2021. These dollars could be more wisely invested elsewhere—for example, into court-monitored diversion programs that hold juveniles accountable while providing rehabilitation, or to hire additional juvenile probation counselors. King County has the responsibility to ensure that we are serving juvenile offenders and the public the best we can with the limited resources we have available.

Though King County recently transmitted its own [internal review](#) of Restorative Community Pathways, it did not address issues related to performance issues, lack of detailed performance metrics, or a lack of transparency.

As a former federal prosecutor, I firmly believe that juvenile diversion programs are a critical component of our criminal justice system. In fact, the importance of the mission of juvenile diversion programs—to rehabilitate youth who are on a bad path and help them live out their true potential—makes it all the more important that we hold RCP to a basic standard of success. If King County is providing subpar juvenile diversion services, we must act with urgency to improve them for the sake of our county's youth. King County also has a clear responsibility to prevent such tragedies as the recent senseless killing of the Shoreline woman by a juvenile who was failed by the county's diversion system.

Due to the seriousness of the matter at hand, the public controversies, and the failure of King County's internal reports to offer opportunities for improvement, I formally request that the King County Auditor's Office perform financial and performance audits of Restorative Community Pathways as part of its 2025 work program. These audits are necessary to provide transparency to the public, to deliver justice to those impacted by the crimes committed, to provide for the safety of our communities, and to improve our services to juvenile offenders who need diversion programs that are truly restorative.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Reagan Dunn  
Vice Chairman  
Metropolitan King County Council