

## **Public Comment for Agenda Item 21-0715**

These comments were received beginning Saturday, December 11, 2021 at 12:30pm – Sunday, December 12, 2021 at 12:12pm. The cut off time for public and citizen comments was 2:00pm on Sunday, December 12<sup>th</sup>

### **1. Tyler Whittenberg (Do Not Rush Vote – Seek Further Input)**

In a democracy, when the community raises serious concerns, it is the responsibility of elected representatives to pause and listen, not push forward without acknowledging and thoughtfully considering their disapproval. It is not true that the County is legally bound to build the new facility, nor is it true that the facility is necessary to meet state and federal "sight and sound" requirements. Moreover, none of these justifications require an urgent vote on the matter without seeking further input from those most impacted. Youth heal in communities, not cages. We owe it to our Durham youth and parents to invest in preventative measures, not expand the mental, social, economic and physical harms associated with secure detention. For these reasons, I urge the commissioners to vote no on the proposal for a new youth home and to seek further input from those most impacted.

### **2. AK Krauss (Funding)**

I am urging you to vote no on funding the new youth jail. This money could be far better spent on wraparound programs or prevention programs for young people, giving them an opportunity to get the support they need, rather than treating them as disposable through a system of incarceration. Saying that this new jail will have services such as medical services is a red herring, youth shouldn't have to be incarcerated to access medical care. With the changes coming to Durham, there will be more and more people wanting to criminalize BIPOC youth, in effort to control them and keep them out of sight in an increasingly whiter and wealthier city. Do not listen to those voices, support the young folks who've lived here and grown up here and fund actual support systems for them, rather than testing them as disposable and jailable.

### **3. Malenia Swinton (Seek Further Input)**

As a youth advocate, I'm deeply disheartened that Durham County has prioritized building more cages instead of investing in the proper resources to support our young people. There are so many community organizations working tirelessly to provide services that our county has failed to provide; and the discussion around expanding a youth jail feels like a slap in the face.

Our LGBTQIA+ children are experiencing houselessness at an alarming rate; our schools do not have the resources to address learning deficits; our mental health services for young people are still lagging; and our kids and families are currently being impacted by rising inflation and stagnant wages. Why are we not prioritizing community outreach? Expansion of support services? Affordable housing?

A cage is not a solution. I am urging the BOCC to make a more concerted effort to consult and work with community organizations and actual youth to find effective solutions for Durham before making decisions that only lead to more trauma and broken community relationships.

Thank you to Durham Beyond Policing and other groups for advocating and working towards an equitable community.

**4. Casey Bishopp (Seek Further Input)**

I urge commissioners to dutifully listen to the concerns of constituents and halt plans for an expanded youth prison. Prisons don't fix, change, or improve anything or anyone at all. Children need nurturing. Hear our voices.

**5. Paul Wunkoop (Vote Against)**

This is not what community safety and wellness looks like. These are elected officials clearly and deliberately going behind residents' backs to criminalize Black and Brown kids. This is unacceptable.

**6. Jessica Garza (Seek Further Input)**

I am urging you to delay the vote to build a \$30M new, expanded youth jail. Please take the time to make a more thoughtful decision after hearing community concerns. Hear our concerns when we say that every stage of the youth punishment system can cause harm to adolescent development. Children are often met with intimidation and physical force upon arrest and are removed from their school and support system while detained. We believe that placing programs and services within an environment of trauma does not heal children - rather, investing in preventative care that keeps Durham's children in their homes and communities heals children. Let us work together so we can create a safer, healthier environment for our children and the people of Durham.

**7. Beau Fogle (Vote Against)**

Building a new, expanded youth jail puts the mental health of our youth at risk. A 2013 study by NC State shows that treating mental health concerns through outpatient treatment reduces arrest rates for people who experience mental illness. Additionally, using this approach saves money. Putting funds into a service that would provide rehabilitation programs for youth who have committed crimes could both save money and help prevent future arrests. The youth who are arrested are still humans and deserve to be treated as such. Methods that can be used for rehabilitation have come a far way thanks to the development of the field of psychology. Using money to take advantage of these advancements rather than relying on incarceration may be beneficial.

**8. Daniela HB (Vote Against)**

Hello, yall. My name is Daniela. I have shared space with most of you before, concerned years ago about Jair, a DPS student who was incarcerated, charges dropped, and sent to the claws of ICE anyways to eventually be deported. With how things are set up now, it doesn't look like the facilities set up would have prevented this painful separation either and hasn't for so many Durham families and community members. Our youth don't need cages. They need community. Commissioner Howerton passionately spoke at the DBP town hall, "but what about the victims of violence?" and please know we are not at odds. The victims of violence of the same children who also are victims of an oppressive cold world. We must

be more creative. Pushing children into cages will not prevent more violence. Please give time for public comments from us, from folks directly affected.

**9. Micalyn Struble (Delay Vote/Seek Further Input)**

Children grow into happy, healthy adults through positive relationships in their communities. Jails deny our youth the opportunities to foster these relationships. Expanding the youth jail will only cause further harm to criminalized children. Please consider redirecting the money intended for this expansion toward education, community organizations, mental health resources, and anti-poverty measures instead. I urge you to delay this vote and listen to the Durham community.

**10. Joyce Ventimiglia (Delay Vote)**

Please, you must delay the vote on the expansion of the youth jail in Durham County. It is vital that you listen to your constituents in this matter and there has not been a high enough level of engagement or transparency.

**11. Anna Benfield (Delay Vote/Seek Further Input)**

I am deeply concerned with the accelerated timeline of moving forward with approving the new youth detention center in Durham. The voices of communities directly impacted by youth incarceration, including youth and their families, must be heard! The current process has not made space for these communities to meaningfully engage with the County Commissioners in this planning process. We are watching. Please listen to the Community Safety and Wellness Task Force: delay this vote and make time to hear community concerns!

**12. Becca Diamond (Delay Vote)**

Putting youths in jail helps nobody, especially not the kids or the community. This will tear families apart and further harm the community. Do not do this.

**13. Andrew Vanderford (Vote Against)**

Put the money in the community first and see how that goes. I bet it's more effective in the long term. Lets do it!

**14. Megan Kratz (Delay Vote)**

We have to envision a better future for Durham than one in which 3 times as many kids are locked up. Incarceration is inherently antitherapeutic - what would it look like to instead spend \$30 million supporting youth in the community through schools, libraries, activity programs and mental health support? Please delay the vote on the expanded youth jail project and give time for the community to voice their concerns with building an expanded youth jail and to offer visions of where we could build instead.

**15. Susan Nobblitt (Delay Vote)**

Hi! I am reaching out as a resident of Durham county to urge that you DO NOT VOTE and instead DELAY the vote on Monday for the construction of a new youth jail. I am urging you to do this for many reasons, but mostly because there has not been sufficient community engagement in a decision that would impact \$30 million dollars of our

governments funds towards infrastructure that we know our community cares a lot about. We deserve the chance to discuss as a community and share our thoughts with the county commissioners before significant funds are misused. In addition, the board of county commissioners has misrepresented the legal obligation and timeline in a way that has shut down and disallowed for our guaranteed engagement as the community. Finally, in the one existing way the community has access to engage in these relevant conversations, the Community Safety and Wellness Taskforce voted UNANIMOUSLY to recommend the board of county commissioners delay the vote for 6 months to provide for better community engagement. We the people of Durham are making ourselves very clear when we say we do not want you to rush forward and instead we expect and want you to slow down and do your civic duty to allow our community to discuss together and share our views about how to move forward. You have been elected to serve us, the least you can do is give us an opportunity to TALK with you about what is going on.

**16. Rachel Helms (Vote Against)**

As stated in previous talks with Durham County Commissioners, the needs and desires of residents of Durham have not been taken into account with the proposal of the new youth detention center. This proposal is misrepresenting the obligation that the county has to provide a reasonable alternative for housing youths separate from adults. The incredible amount of money proposed for this project could be reallocate to improving current youth detention conditions, on a smaller scale, and investing in community resources (see the myriad proposals listed at the Durham Beyond Policing townhall) to help prevent youth detention. We are not solving any problems by building a new youth detention center. Children do not heal in cages, they heal in community.

**17. Eli Meyerhoff (Shift Funds Elsewhere)**

Building a new youth jail would make Durham a city based more on incarceration and punishment. This would allow Durham's government to continue to shirk blame onto young people for the systemic problems of poverty, inequality, and structural racism. Instead of expanding Durham's carceral institutions, the County Commissioners should make policies of increased taxation that shift funds away from the exploitative institutions, like Duke University and other big corporations, that cause inequality and poverty in Durham, and shift these funds directly into the hands of working class people who are already supporting each other through their networks of community care and solidarity.

**18. Meg Stein (Delay Vote)**

We have real concerns about this new youth detention center and are asking you to listen to and engage those concerns as is required by your job description as commissioners. Please delay this vote so that we in the Durham community have more time to talk with you about our concerns and ideas.

It may seem like the new youth detention center is the only option, but there is never only one option. If we perceive that there is then it's due to a lack of imagination. We in the community have a lot of ideas for other options. It may seem hard to engage those ideas because they are new and different from the way Durham County has been operating but

that doesn't make them any less important. The hardest questions to engage are often the most important ones.

Please do not ignore us and our concerns. Delay this vote in order to engage with us and fulfill your job as elected officials.

**19. Phoebe Gooding (Shift Funding Elsewhere)**

Our youth are the future of Durham. We need to use all the resources we can to create opportunities for healing. Jails do not allow for opportunities for healing. In fact they do the opposite. Building a youth jail is solely for the purpose of profiting off of our youth's mistakes. The community is greatly opposed to our tax dollars going to a youth jail. Listen to the community!

**20. Virginia Wertman (Vote Against)**

I am so disheartened that our county is pushing to create a facility, which is unneeded and harmful, instead of considering progressive, effective alternatives to incarceration. Children deserve better, and Durham could be a model for true justice if we spent this money on things that our most under-served, marginalized communities actually want and need: free/affordable healthcare & mental healthcare, affordable housing, food, and all the other resources that are consistently inaccessible, overburdened, or simply nonexistent in our city.

The children stuck in these carceral systems are scared and traumatized, and they do not deserve to be locked away. Please, we are begging you to help us and hear our voices.

**21. Austin Vo (Vote Against)**

I really hope we can help our youth structurally by building community and enabling their engagement in the arts and sciences without locking them up in jails.

**22. Chris Rossi (Vote Against)**

They say that actions speak louder than words. Your most recent act is to misdirect the public about the timeline for debate on cages for children, to discourage community input or oversight. That speaks loudly to me. Is that really what you want to say?

**23. Michaela Woodsmans (Delay Vote)**

We are asking that you delay your vote on the expansion of the youth jail in order to hear community concerns. This affects many people and many lives and we need to hear the effects this will have and the alternative options for funding to protect and best serve youth in our community. This vote is being rushed and there has not been enough community conversation surrounding it. Please do what is right and allow for more voices to be heard before voting on this measure.

**24. Camille Zimmerman (Vote Against)**

The construction of the youth jail only recently gained widespread public attention despite the Commissioners' claim of meaningful public notice and involvement through regular BOCC meetings over the past six years. The stakeholders identified by Commissioners as supporting the new jail are mostly people who have direct professional ties to the juvenile

criminal legal system. Missing from these public conversations over the past six years have been communities directly impacted by youth incarceration, including youth and their families. During a recent town hall organized by local groups to raise awareness about this new jail, Durham residents raised serious questions about the County's justifications for allocating nearly \$30 million to locking up our youth, yet County Commissioners have yet to properly address public concern. None of the justifications cited by the Commissioners require an urgent resolution, and all warrant further public discussion, which is less likely to happen if the vote goes forward on Monday.

In a democracy, when the community raises serious concerns, it is the responsibility of elected representatives to pause and listen, not push forward without acknowledging and thoughtfully considering their disapproval.

### **LACK OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

The 'Youth Heal in Communities, Not Cages' Public Town Hall on November 18, 2021 was the first time the wider community had a meaningful opportunity to engage in a conversation around the youth jail proposal. State [1] and local [2,3] data demonstrate that youth incarceration rates have declined in the last decade, leaving no justification for adding 36 new beds to the jail. Over 200 people attended the Youth Heal In Communities Town Hall, and were overwhelmingly opposed to the new jail. Residents offered numerous alternative ideas for how the County Commissioners could invest \$30M in youth programming across the county for harm prevention and restorative justice.

The importance of community engagement was lifted by many residents during the 'Youth Heal In Communities Not Cages' Town Hall:

"Anytime that decisions are made that will impact an entire community, the only way to make them in an informed and integritous way is to have the voices of the directly impacted community present in the decision as well as the process involved in making the decision."  
-Black parent and Durham resident The new youth jail promises improved medical services. However, children should not need incarceration in order to access healthcare. Every stage of the youth punishment system is counter-productive to adolescent development [4]. Children are often met with intimidation and physical force upon arrest and are removed from their school and support system while detained [5]. During the 'Youth Heal In Communities Not Cages' Town Hall, members voiced their belief that placing programs and services within an environment of trauma does not heal children:

"Please don't think that just because you provide services in-house that that's the answer to the problem. That is not. So my story in involvement in the adjudication process with my child tells me that this whole process from start to finish is tragically flawed and it needs revision"- Black parent and Durham resident More community input is needed to explore preventative care that keeps Durham's children in their homes and communities and not locked facilities.

### **MISREPRESENTATION OF OBLIGATION**

The County has repeatedly referenced a 2019 settlement agreement that it claims requires them to build a new youth jail. In actuality, that agreement states that the County will build a new youth jail if feasible or develop a “reasonable alternative” to maintain sound and sight separation between juveniles and adults. The County has not yet acknowledged or listened to any such reasonable alternatives, despite nearly 200 Town Hall participants voicing an abundance of alternatives. Additionally, sound and sight separation between youth and adults is protected through federal regulation under JJDP, the Juvenile Justice Delinquency Prevention Act, and has become state law since the time of the settlement. Durham County is already fulfilling its legal requirements.

Barbara Fedders, UNC School of Law, Assistant Professor and Director of the Youth Justice Clinic, said:

“Nothing in state or federal statutes and nothing in the 2019 settlement between Durham County and the Estate of Uniece Fennell legally obligates the construction of the facility currently under consideration. Building a \$30 million new detention facility is a policy choice but it does not appear by any means to be the only way for the County to fulfill its legal obligations.”

During the ‘Youth Heal in Communities, Not Cages’ Public Town Hall on November 18, 2021, the mother of the child referenced in the 2019 settlement expressed her desire for Durham County to imagine alternatives beyond incarceration:

“I would like to see some kind of programs put in, like a wrap-around program that comes into the homes with the families and works with them. And gets these kids out, and gives them a different view on life, and gives them things to do to be a good product of the community, to have them involved in the community.”

### **MISLEADING TIMELINE**

At the end of the Town Hall, Commissioners were asked if they could offer a timeline for when they would make their vote on funding the new youth jail. Commissioners said they did not know and they committed to decide and let us know. We learned of the imminent vote on Friday morning through a press release by Durham County, three full weeks after the Town Hall, and one business day before the vote. Though this fulfills the minimum requirement by law, this is not meaningful public notice on an issue where serious concerns have been raised about the lack of community engagement.

### **DISREGARD FOR TASK FORCE RECOMMENDATION**

Durham Community Safety and Wellness Task Force is composed of community residents jointly appointed by Durham County Commissioners, City of Durham, and the Board of Education. Community Safety and Wellness Task Force members unanimously voted in a public meeting on November 10 to make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners that the County provide a minimum of six more months for public comment regarding the plan for a new youth jail, with special attention to the inclusion of directly impacted youth and families who are involved in the criminal-legal system. As a Task Force charged by the Commissioners with promoting community involvement in decisions regarding community safety and wellness, they offered to help provide forums

for public comment from Durham residents during that time period. Why aren't the County Commissioners honoring this recommendation?

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**25. Charlotte Dragga (Shift Funds Elsewhere)**

Durham's youth detention facility is aging, and we cannot continue to incarcerate our youth in adult jails. No one denies this. However, using these facts to justify a significant expansion of the facility represents a complete betrayal of the progressive values Durham claims to embrace. Incarceration, whether of youth or adults, does nothing to reduce crime and instead, creates a cycle of trauma and stigmatization that can follow a person throughout their lifetime. A shinier facility will do nothing to change that, and history shows that expanding the facility will only cause more children to be funnelled into it. This proposal will do nothing to help our youth, much less arrest the forces that led to the tragic loss of Niecey Fennell. Do not approve it; instead, fund alternative services that allow our kids to stay engaged in their communities and help them, and our society, begin to heal.

**26. Jamie Storyward (Use Funding to Renovate, not Build)**

I worked in the Durham County Jail in 2015 and 16. Durham County does not need increased capacity for incarceration. If conditions are poor in the current youth jail, please dedicate this budget to renovations of the existing space. Do not use taxpayer dollars to build a new jail. Please take the time to hear more from your community.

**27. Cora Hirschfeld (Vote Against)**

As someone who works with Black and Brown youth in an alternative school setting, I see first-hand the value in investing in sustainable initiatives that are evidence-based (such as safe and affordable housing, and accessible community recreational spaces for young people). The National Research Council states that "Every stage of the youth punishment system is counter-productive to adolescent development." The argument that is a "better, safer" jail because of new facilities does not change the fact that taking children away from their families, communities, and schools harms and exacerbates mental health issues and wealth inequality. Prisons hurt us all and in no way prevent violence from happening. I urge Durham Board of County Commissioners to rethink how we as leaders treat our children.

**28. Devin Lancaster (Vote Against)**

What would be the benefits of this institution? Please let know.

**29. Eevi Oon (Vote Against)**

The county commissioners need to take into account the recommendations of the Community Safety and Wellness Taskforce. Do you actually care about democratic input from the community? If you mislead people on the timeline and rush ahead to Tuesdays meeting to try and catch community members off guard, how can we call that a democratic process?



There are other choices before Durham County. We can envision many more possibilities than just another cage.

Barbara Fedders, UNC School of Law, Assistant Professor and Director of the Youth Justice Clinic, said:

“Nothing in state or federal statutes and nothing in the 2019 settlement between Durham County and the Estate of Uniece Fennell legally obligates the construction of the facility currently under consideration. Building a \$30 million new detention facility is a policy choice but it does not appear by any means to be the only way for the County to fulfill its legal obligations.”

We can provide healthcare, education, a way out to children without keeping them penned up. We need to prevent children having encounters with the carceral system entirely instead of giving them better jails.

**30. Erin Norton (Seek Further Input)**

It's disappointing to hear that the Durham BOC is interested in spending \$30 million on a youth jail when that money could be used to support the youth in our communities in ways that actually benefit them instead of causing lasting harm to youth and their families. The 2019 settlement does not require the BOC to build a new youth jail. In actuality, that agreement states that the County will build a new youth jail if feasible or develop a “reasonable alternative” to maintain sound and sight separation between juveniles and adults. Further, the Durham Community Safety and Wellness Task Force recommended to the Board of County Commissioners in November that the County provide a minimum of six more months for public comment regarding the plan for a new youth jail - why is this recommendation not being honored and why is the county not listening to the reasonable alternatives being put forward by concerned citizens of Durham?

**31. Gina Rose (Vote Against/Funding)**

Please reject funding the youth detention center. The funding of this project is not in line with any of the values that the BOCC vocalizes. Incarceration of youth does nothing but traumatize, perpetuate inequity and cause family separation. Please, please, vote no the funding.

**32. Caroline Stayer-Brew (Vote Against/Funding)**

I beg you, please do not allow any new youth detention facilities to be built! Instead, use that enormous funding to invest in programs and resources that actually support and enhance the wellbeing of Durham youth and their families. I work as a clinical trauma therapist in the community and I strongly believe that youth detention causes harm to individuals institutionalized in the system and to the larger community as a result. This funding should be used to strengthen supportive programs, not punitive and traumatizing ones.

**33. Alexis Gumbs (Vote Against)**

I love Durham because it is one of the most creative, innovative cities in the United States. The youth jail is neither an effective response to the problems our young people face nor one that is worthy of the brilliance of this city

**34. Lewis Wallace (Delay the Vote)**

Please delay the plans to build a new youth jail. We need deep community engagement in any plan that affects our children, and we know that cages don't make our families or communities safer. County commission is accountable to your voters and we need you to step up in this moment so that we can develop creative, anti-racist, community solutions to the challenges facing young people.

A pause in the process should be the least of it. I implore you to do the right thing.

**35. Katie Lucas (Vote Against)**

Our youth deserve better. There are proven community engagement strategies that better serve our youth than jail.

**36. Kayla Bryant (Vote Against)**

I am opposed to the building of a youth jail in Durham County. There are far more humane, compassionate, and effective means of addressing crime among Durham's youth, such as preventative community programming and restorative justice. Jail is not an effective means of reform for any person, and is detrimental to the development of young people.

Furthermore, I am writing to demand transparency and accountability to the community as you move on this issue. Involve community members in this discussion. Listen to the recommendations of the Durham Community Safety and Wellness Task Force.

**37. Susanna Duncan (Delay the Vote)**

I'm writing to urge the Durham Board of County Commissioners to delay the vote on the construction of a new youth jail. As a Durham resident and parent of two children I am concerned about further incarceration of youth in our community and the devastating impact that this will have on young people and their families. I believe there are alternative programs that with a \$30 million investment would actually serve youth in need of support. And the Board of County Commissioners needs to listen to meaningful community input and concerns on this issue, requiring a delay of the vote for this to happen. Thank you.

**38. Catherine Edgerton (Delay the Vote)**

I am writing to insist that our county commissioners slow down the process to vote on funding a youth jail. To push up the timeline is appallingly undemocratic. I grew up in Durham and believe that our city has the capacity to hold its people's concerns instead of steamrolling them for the benefit of an institution that will harm our youth, our future, and our communities. The urgency incited by pushing up the vote time is nothing short of alarming. Please slow down this process. Thank you.

**39. Alaire Hughey (Vote Against)**

So much data shows that youth don't heal when incarcerated. Please have faith in our collective imagination to use this money towards something that doesn't traumatize our kids!!

**40. Lauren Walters (Vote Against)**

## Youth Heal In Communities Not Cages

**41. Chelsea Amato (Delay the Vote)**

Please delay this vote and hear community concerns!!! Children shouldn't be in jail, their futures will be ruined

**42. Jade Wilson (Delay the Vote)**

The County Commissioner needs to delay the vote. For one, the public wasn't give enough notice. Where is the harm in delaying when this is a major concern to us. We must be heard before there's a vote.

**43. Natalie Huntley (Delay the Vote)**

Delay this vote. Children should NEVER be jailed. There is a cycle of incarceration that can be ended by social work.

**44. Miss B. Haven (Vote Against)**

this needs to stop. misleading to our community.

**45. Claire Alexandre (Vote Against)**

This is not acceptable, we can't be putting kids in cages. More community input is needed to explore preventative care that keeps Durham's children in their homes and communities and not locked facilities. This money should go towards schools and community engagements for youth, along with accessible mental health services.

**46. Nat Lazakis (Delay the Vote)**

It would be a mistake for the Durham Board of County Commissioners to vote on building a \$30M new, expanded youth jail without listening to the well-founded objections many Durham residents have voiced against this project. In a recent town hall, members of the community disapproved of constructing a new jail, urging that public funds be used instead for youth programs that are not centered around punishment and incarceration. The Durham Board of County Commissioners has an obligation to delay the vote and engage these alternative, non-authoritarian ways to promote youth wellness and safety.

**47. Matthew Phillips (Vote Against)**

No new jails! Especially not for kids

**48. Fave Koenigsmark (Delay the Vote)**

I am writing as a concerned Durham resident to demand an immediate pause in the process of funding and building a new youth detention center in the County of Durham. I feel that the justification and desire for the new Youth Home, as well as the opportunity for public input, has not been made clear to the community at large.

Less than 1 month ago, nearly 200 Durham residents participated in the "Youth Heal in Communities, Not Cages" public town hall. Data was presented to refute claims that an expanded facility was needed due to an increase in juvenile detention, when in fact state and local data suggest otherwise. Additionally, residents offered numerous alternative

ideas for how the County Commissioners could invest \$30M in youth programming across the county for harm prevention and restorative justice.

However, it feels that rather than engaging with the community on these points of discussion, the County Commissioners have instead decided to accelerate the timeline for voting on the new youth jail facility plans. It is disheartening to see our elected officials push forward without acknowledging and thoughtfully considering the disapproval of the community. If this project has been in the works for 6 years, then surely we can take 6 more months to truly decide the best way to spend this \$30M.

I, and many Durham residents, believe there are other ways to keep our children local and safe without having to utilize facilities such as this one. I urge you to pause this vote, and hear us out. Thank you.

**49. Dana Kouchel (Vote Against)**

Durham youth need to be supported, not locked up!!!!!!!

**50. Lamercie Saint-Hilaire (Vote Against)**

Building a \$30 million new detention facility Will not make us safe and is not what the people want.

**51. Christina Miller (Vote Against)**

The Public Town Hall on November 18, 2021 was the first opportunity the public had to learn more details about about the \$30M planned expansion of the youth jail. It was also the first opportunity for our neighbors to share their experiences, views, and concerns. Effective policy making centers the needs of the individuals impacted and provides ample opportunity for these folks to voice their concern. To truly execute on the vision Mayor O'Neal outlined as she took office for "...a Durham that listens to and cares for every citizen, and we will leave no one behind..." this vote needs to be delayed with a public hearing for solutions to be presented that will truly address impacted youths' needs that envisions solutions for safety and support that are not centered in incarceration.

**52. Ashley Low (Delay Vote)**

Please delay the vote on the youth jail in Durham. This vote shouldn't go on because there hasn't been proper community involvement with this. Also, a task force recommendation was disregarded.

**53. Amanda Storyward (Vote Against)**

Building a youth jail becomes a self fulfilling prophecy. There is no investment in the community, in children, or in the future of Durham. We know what has an impact on crime and on violence and those things have never been jails. Please use this money on initiatives that work to create a better community. Please expand the use of restorative justice courts to all youth justice cases. This significantly reduces recidivism because it fosters the community connection element to crimes and addresses root issues. In RJ we all make a commitment to solving issues together. This is the way that all courts should go. Punishment and youth jails have never fixed anything and are statistically less successful

in the theoretical charge of reducing crime and increasing public safety. Additionally, money needs to be infused into communities, social welfare programs, and after school activities in order to reduce violence. The evidence shows that this is what works to reduce violence. If your goal is really to solve the social ills that befall us, please do what we know works. Not a new youth jail but investing in our communities.

**54. Jenna Calderone (Vote Against)**

As a person who has worked both professionally and as a volunteer in government and policy work, both for the government and for community non-profits, I find it completely unconscionable to ram a vote like this through your legislation process without any meaningful community engagement or input. The public is not ignorant— we know that the reason public officials all over this rotten country continue to push carceral policy with the least amount of public input possible is because you all know that this is NOT RIGHT. You have folks with endless life-altering experience at the hands of state who are begging you to listen to them. Your choice to avoid these interactions is cowardly, it's disgusting, and it's going to get children killed. Shame on all of you.

**55. Maya Hart (Vote Against)**

Youth deserve care, healing and a commitment to our future.

**56. Karen Tarkulich (Delay Vote)**

As a Durham resident, I'm urging y'all to delay the vote set for Monday on whether to advance the plan to spend \$30M on a new youth jail. There has not been appropriate time to engage with the community and address input and concerns, and the vote should not go forward until this has happened.

It's unacceptable that y'all are trying to force this on the Durham community without appropriate input, by rushing a vote through and ignoring the (unanimous) recommendation of the Safety and Wellness Task force that there be at a minimum six more months for public comment on this proposed plan for the youth jail. It is your job to listen to the community. Why are you ignoring the task force? Why are you ignoring the Durham community? Why are you ignoring our youth?

Not only has there not been appropriate time for input, but you've led the public to believe that y'all are required to build a new youth jail which is just untrue.

What is the rush to pour money into locking up hypothetical children? Why would you rather lock them up instead of using those funds to set those same children up for a happier, healthier life? Why not proactively develop programs to make Durham County childrens' lives better instead of waiting to trap them? Who is this jail serving, really? Because it's certainly not the children. Building this jail is just laying a trap and waiting to catch them. Why is that a priority?

Again, I'm urging you to delay the vote set for Monday on whether to advance plans to spend \$30M on a new youth jail.

**57. Sinan Gokur (Delay Vote)**

As a resident, I call on representatives to wait until they can thoroughly inform and involve community members who will be directly impacted by this proposal

**58. Naana Ewool (Delay Vote)**

I'm so disappointed by the county's apparent commitment to youth incarceration at any cost. And frustrated by not only the lack of will for imagination, but also the lack of inclusion of community input and disregard for community calls to pause. We urge you to DELAY THE VOTE and heed the unanimous recommendation brought by the safety and wellness task force to pause this process for at least 6 months in order to allow for community weigh in on this proposal that will impact so many lives. We know that Durham can and must do better, and there are so many ways we can work together to make sure our youth have ample opportunity and space for healing, growth, and options for true accountability.

**59. Caitie Geoghegan (Funding)**

As a Durham resident and member of the community I urge you to listen to the public concern and consider the impacts of what the funding for a youth jail really means. If you want to help young people and make the community safer, then a jail is not the way to do it. Our youth need help and attention and to know that people value them and will care for them. By approving this funding you are attempting to ignore the larger problems that exist in the community instead of addressing them. You also are continuing to give power to the people who are professional invested in having a jail rather than giving the power to people of the community who are clearing advocating against this jail. Please do not fund this project

**60. Elizabeth Arant (Vote Against)**

The community should have the chance to participate in this decision and weigh in on how best to improve safety in our city. A new youth jail is an ineffective, unnecessary, and expensive solution, and this money can be better spent addressing the issues that lead youths to become incarcerated in the first place.

**61. Linda Chupkowski (Vote Against)**

In a democracy, when the community raises serious concerns, it is the responsibility of elected representatives to pause and listen, not push forward without acknowledging and thoughtfully considering their disapproval.

**62. AJ Williams (Vote Against)**

I'm appalled that our County Commissioners would approve moving forward with a process that has not included nor considered the input and feedback from Durham residents, which was a clear and unanimous recommendation from the Community Safety and Wellness Task Force.

I'm asking, as a Durham resident, that the County extend this process for public consideration before rushing to complete a facility to jail more youth while there are other

meaningful alternatives that could help change the trajectory of our youth in the city that have been failed by systems meant to serve them.

**63. Austin Wadle (Vote Against)**

Why invest in prisons for children when we can do something that actually lives up to what those children deserve: justice and liberation.

**64. Kaitlin Fox (Vote Against)**

I am deeply upset that our elected officials think building a 30 million dollar detention center for youths is the right course of action. There is enough literature, resources, and lived experiences that prove how detrimental prison systems are, especially in the youth community. Your job is to listen to the people and the people are saying “stop”. Stop the nonsense of the prison industrial complex and instead ask your community how healing works for them. Building this facility would only create more trauma cycles.

**65. Alyssa Ng (Delay Vote)**

Delay the vote!!!! There needs to be more time to hear the public concerns

**66. Eric Knight (Delay Vote)**

Delay the vote!!!! There needs to be more time to hear the public concerns

**67. Kenny Dalsheimer (Delay Vote)**

Please listen to the voices of your community and "press pause" on your vote for funding the youth jail. There is no reason to rush this decision, commit large sums of public money to project many in Durham oppose, many directly impacted by your/our policy decisions related to community safety, health, youth empowerment.

**68. Elizabeth Godown (Delay Vote)**

I attended the recent Town Hall and heard a number of arguments and perspectives on many sides of this issue. It was abundantly clear that more deliberation, collaboration, and compromise is needed before moving forward on solidifying a 30 million dollar decision that has such profound impacts on residents of Durham and surrounding counties. Community concerns need to be heard and engaged with, not side stepped. As the representatives of your constituents, you have an obligation to engage with the concerns and difficult questions that are being raised - not rush to solidify a decision that will impact the lives of your residents for years to come. As a social worker experienced in trauma and working with youth populations who have experienced incarceration and life in residential facilities (e.g. group homes in foster care) - I have grave concerns about this proposal. While I recognize the need for quick action to address the infrastructure problems of the current facility, moving forward on an elaborate new construction plan is neither the most efficient nor effective way to address current problems and to tackle the issues facing youth detention in the long term. You have an opportunity to use the incredible resource of community voices, those with lived experience, and local experts to craft short- and long-term solutions that improve the lives of these youth and ensure community safety. To ignore public engagement in this issue and the opportunity it presents would be irresponsible, unresponsive, and harmful - to the youth currently in detention, those

detained in future, and to your relationship with the community at large. I ask you to fulfill your commitment to Represent your community. Hear their concerns, build solutions together, and balance the needs of all sides of this debate. This vote NEEDS TO BE DELAYED to allow that process to continue and to decide on the best solution possible. Thank you.

**69. Joanna Rutter (Delay Vote)**

No new youth jail. We can fix problems in our community without incarceration. Delay the vote.

**70. Annie Creasey (Vote Against)**

Hello I am a Durham county resident and social worker. I believe we should be moving towards youth healing through programs that do not incarcerate youth but provide restorative justice and mental health treatment. I want to vote for representatives that will promote you this action.

**71. Sarah Gibson (Seek Further Input)**

I'm extremely concerned about the building of this youth jail in the midst of school-to-prison pipeline policies and hyperpolicing of schools and marginalized communities. These types of endeavors are profit-motivated and do not serve the interests of any community, nor any of the individuals therein. The acceleration of the construction timeline evidences this as a slapshod operation in the interests of those who profit off of the incarceration of minors. I encourage Durham to at least follow the task force's recommendation of additional time for public comment.

**72. Anole Halper (Delay Vote)**

As a social worker, I know the destructive impact of the carceral system, one that ripples out and affects the whole community. As a progressive community I am proud to be a part of, Durham has the opportunity to demonstrate this, and heal youth outside of cages, through relationships, opportunity, and care. At minimum, extend the deadline so the community has a chance to be part of this decision

**73. Sandra Korn (Vote Against)**

I have been a Durham County resident for seven years and I'm writing to add my voice to ask for a delay on the youth jail vote. It's important to make sure that the community is directly impacted by incarceration are given time to fully be heard in this process. As a Jewish community member and a person of faith, I strongly believe that youth need trauma-informed support that they can only get in their communities, not in jail. Thank you, county commissioners, for giving this issue the time it needs!

**74. Miriam Lieberman (Delay Vote)**

Clearly our children, and all children are OUR children, deserve compassionate treatment and facilities that are safe and where learning, haling and growing can take place. They



deserve your time and attention so please delay the vote and find the best possible solution before making any decisions that impact our most vulnerable.

**75. Brenna Ariza-McColl (Vote Against)**

I do not support this timeline nor the construction of a youth detention center.

**76. Miriam Brodersen (Vote Against)**

I was shocked and saddened to hear that the Durham County Commissioners are moving so quickly to vote on a new youth jail without adequate opportunity for community input. Incarcerating youth does not stop crime-- it often leads youth to get stuck in a life in which they have few options but to keep committing crime. As a social worker who has worked with youth from low wealth communities, I have seen the difference that mental health care, education, and job training programs can make. I urge you to vote no on the youth jail and to put the money towards social programs that will help youth make different choices.

**77. Caroline Fry (Delay Vote)**

Do not rush this vote - first engage communities who will be impacted in a meaningful way. There are myriad ways this \$30M could be spent - not just on building new cages, but by offering youth programming across the county for harm prevention and restorative justice. Delay the vote and listen to the people.

**78. Meghan McDowell (Vote Against)**

I am writing to urge you to reconsider your vote tonight in light of the overwhelming call from your constituents to stop the expansion of the youth jail. Your move to expand Durham's ability to incarcerate youth, including youth from other counties, is regressive and out of step with state and national trends that illustrate a sharp decrease in youth detention. How do you respond to this? We have a District Attorney who has taken great strides to reduce the number of youth with secure custody orders and has succeeded. Why not join D.A. DeBerry and develop solutions that keep youth out of cages? A 36 bed facility is not needed to accommodate Raise the Age legislation or meet Sight & Sound requirements. Yet, rather than respond to these points made by concerned community members, you continue to push this narrative. Most significantly, we know that this expanded facility will disproportionately cage Black youth. How do you respond to this? We are asking each of you to join us in our vision of a Durham that says "No!" to youth incarceration. And instead, becomes a national leader in youth de-carceration. The decision is in your hands.

**79. Joanna Brandenburg (Vote Against)**

Surely there are more important things for the city to spend money on than the school-to-prison pipeline. Anyone who has a hand in locking more children away should be ashamed of themselves. Where are your ethics?

**80. Tobi Lippin (Delay Vote)**

Public participation is woefully missing from this process. Caging young people speaks to a community that has given up on the future generation. This whole project needs

rethinking with extensive involvement by real people in Durham's communities-not just professionals in the corrections field. S L O W this process down--and consider tanking it and putting the funds into treatment/support/economic resources, health care, vs.dehumanizing children by locking them up.

**81. Chelsea Earles (Delay Vote)**

I'm writing to beg you to slow down the process on deciding about a new jail for Durham youth. I have heard from experts in this area, including people who have experienced being incarcerated as a young person, and they do not support this project. Even the parent of the teen whose death inspired this law does not support this project.

Please please consider the alternatives that are allowed by law and listen to the community safety and wellness task force, the people need time to weigh in on such a huge expenditure and change in the number of youth we are jailing in Durham. I beg you to listen to the people of Durham in a public hearings process before making such a monumental decision. Thank you.

**82. Tim Hoffman (Vote Against/Funding)**

I am writing you urgently to ask that you not go forward with the proposed \$30 million in funding for the construction of a new youth detention facility in Durham county. Simply put, this is an irresponsible use of funds, which will be put forward to lock away more young people, particularly black youth, in Durham. While the cause may seem just on the surface to improve the currently existing detention facilities, this is simply continuing on a path that has proven not to work and contributes greatly to the misery of our communities. Instead, this \$30 million should be put forward toward programs that actually go after the sources of crime: poverty, lack of future prospects, abuse and other underlying causes.

In our society, we have made a choice not to attempt to meaningfully improve the lives of the most marginalized in our community, instead choosing to put them in cages. This is a choice we make, every time we choose to fund a prison or a detention facility, but we also have an opportunity here to make a different choice. The carceral project in America has been proven to be a failure and we should spend this money in a way that will actually work towards the prevention of crime. I urge you to reject this proposal for the time being and take the proper time to hear from the community on how we could better spend these funds.

**83. Jacob Stanley (Vote Against/Funding)**

Durham doesn't need more jails for adults or youth; it needs support for people suffering and struggling in poverty. As Barbara Fedders of UNC Law puts it clearly, building this jail is a choice, not a legal obligation. So it's wrong both morally and as a policy decision to spend \$30 million in public money on more cages for kids.

**84. Dana AlHansan (Vote Against)**

The health and safety of all community members is of utmost concern to all of us. In order to guarantee the health and safety it is essential to listen to community members as we know what is best for us and what our communities need and how we can heal and how we can move forward. Has elected representatives you represent your constituents in

community members and therefore it is essential that you take the time to listen to your constituents and to the community so that we together can ensure the health and safety of all

**85. April Shoemaker (Vote Against)**

I eat in the schools and communities instead of prisons.

**86. Susan Arshack (Vote Against)**

Very few troubled children and teens need to be jailed. There are better treatment options for most children and teens. Please reconsider using the \$30 million dollars on effective approaches that heal.

**87. Laura Ellsaesser (Delay Vote/Funding)**

As the mother of a young black adolescent, I am concerned about the decision being made to increase capacity for juvenile detention when there has been documentation of a steady trend towards decreased need for these facilities. There should instead be a change to focus on other programs to support our children, to help them stay in their homes, heal from the traumas they have experienced at far too young and learn to be positive members of the community. The decision to devote \$30 M towards this project is being rushed and the voices of the community are being silenced and ignored in the process.

**88. Fern Hickey (Delay Vote)**

It is Sunday morning, December 12th and I just woke to the news that the vote to fund an expanded youth jail has been suddenly moved forward to tomorrow night. As a Durham resident and parent, I haven't been made aware of any previous County-organized opportunities to provide comment on this decision - a decision that has significant implications for our youth and for our community as a whole and which involves a significant chunk of public funds without meaningfully involving the public or those who stand to be most impacted on how those funds are best spent. I believe that there are a number of alternatives for how those funds could be spent that would better serve and support our youth, their safety and well-being, and the community as a whole and I would like to see a more meaningful, data-driven, publicly informed exploration of those alternatives before a vote is made on whether to fund an expansion of Durham's youth detention facilities. I personally believe that an expanded youth jail will only harm, not benefit our youth and our community. But regardless of where you fall on whether this expansion is justified, I believe that residents of Durham - and particularly youth and families who have been directly impacted by youth incarceration - deserve multiple, meaningful, well-publicized opportunities to engage and provide input on this decision and for that input to meaningfully inform the decision that is made. I ask the Board of County Commissioners to delay this vote to allow for the time necessary to explore alternatives and to solicit the public engagement that is necessary to make a publicly informed decision that is accountable to the needs and vision of our community and, most especially, its youth. Thank you.

**89. Joe Bell (Vote Against)**

Invest in the the youth and their communities if you actually want positive change. They are the future.

**90. Cassandra Rowe (Vote Against)**

I am appalled and frightened that Durham may be the future home to a youth prison, despite zero input or consideration of the public's vehemence against it. What is this supposed to solve? This achieves only violence against likely traumatized youth, denying healing services and ripping children away from their families and communities. I am currently pregnant with who will be a Black boy, and I thought Durham could be a wonderful place for them to grow up. But this only tells me that I'm wrong and that I should fear for my child in Durham. Not because of crime increases - because they city has decided that children deserve to be thrown in cages and are willing to spend \$30 million in taxpayer dollars to do so rather than directing those funds to trauma services, therapy, extracurricular activities, harm transformation, affordable housing, food assistance, child care - anything that actually might help Durham families.

**91. Damon Williams (Delay Vote)**

I am writing urgently to ask that you delay the vote on this issue and engage the community in good faith to address our concerns. Rushing forward with this youth jail vote reflects the bare minimum lip service to engaging Durham County residents – with blatant disregard for our Community Safety and Wellness Task Force's recommendation to allow more time for our community to weigh in. Please listen to the people. We need time to explore collectively the kinds of care that keep our kids in their homes and among the people who love them – and incarceration stands in direct contrast to what our children need. We deserve better.

**92. Meghan O'Rourke (Vote Against)**

As an early childhood educator, I know that punishment never works to positively change a child's behavior. What does work is collaborating with that child, their family, and the community to get to the root of that child's challenging behaviors. Tools such as therapy, after-school programs, access to nourishing food and safe housing are all much more beneficial for children, their families and their communities than incarceration. As youth incarceration rates have gone down in the last decade, it makes no sense to spend money expanding the capacity of the jail when that money could be spent on tools that keep children out jail in the first place.

**93. Nhawndie Smith (Delay Vote)**

I am disappointed in you all, community members have made sure you hear from those you're supposed to represent. Please hold to your word & postpone the timeline of the vote to give the adequate time you agreed to (no vote before January). This pandemic has highlighted the many issues young people in Durham are facing & the ways those with decision-making power over our lives have a disregard for our health, dignity & development as leaders in this county. You have shown in the past the ways you aspire to model different than other counties replicating the harmful lack of investment in education & care for youth, I urge you all to model differently - our future is at stake.

**94. Chase Ijams (Funding)**

We cannot keep investing vast sums of money to put our struggling youth into jails. There is so much that this money can do to support these same youth in a community-centered, holistic, and human centered programs. Putting our youth in pre-jails does nothing to stop the cycle of violence and give people the support they need to heal.

**95. Tia Byers (Delay Vote)**

As a resident of Durham, I expect the BOCC to act towards the wellbeing of this city. The BOCC's rush decision to push forward on a vote for a new youth jail without a forum for community members to voice their opinion is detrimental to the wellbeing of Durham. We should be able to trust our representatives. This decision destroys that trust. We need more time to develop community-oriented solutions to help the youth in this city. We should not cause irreparable damage to the youth of Durham by rushing this decision. Please reconsider.

**96. Tristan Bavol (Vote Against)**

Our city will not be benefitted by locking up more of our young people. The money spent on incarceration can only harm the souls of these young people and ruin their lives. What we need to be spending money on is making this a community that works for all people, not just the wealthy. You have a moral obligation to help these brothers and sisters in the hopes of realizing the beatific community. I implore you to reconsider building this facility.

**97. Marilyn Hartman (Delay Vote)**

I am urging a postponement of the vote about building a new juvenile jail. The announcement of the vote is only one business day before the Commission votes, and there is widespread community concern and questions that have not yet been fully heard or addressed. Please keep the process open, as there are people who as of yet do not feel their voices have been heard.

**98. Mab Segrest (Vote Against)**

I am writing to urgently request that the Durham County Commissioners NOT act at your Monday meeting to move forward plans for the \$30 million new youth jail/detention center that would raise the population of jailed youth from 12 to 40 beds. (By my math, this is \$750,000 per youth/bed, money that surely would change those young people's lives for substantially if spent in more constructive ways.). Durham's new Community Safety and Wellness Task Force members (appointed by City Council, County Commissioners and the Durham School Board) unanimously voted in a public meeting on November 10 to make a recommendation to the Board of County Commissioners that the County provide a minimum of six more months for public comment regarding the plan for a new youth jail, with special attention to the inclusion of directly impacted youth and families who are involved in the criminal-legal system. As a Task Force charged by the Commissioners with promoting community involvement in decisions regarding community safety and wellness, they offered to help provide forums for public comment from Durham residents during that time period. Why would commissioners undercut the work of the very task force you

yourselves helped to establish with this vote? North Carolina is in the shameful state of considering 8 year olds subject to such carceral detention systems (our "reform" from starting at 6 years old!). You are acting in the midst of a pandemic that has had severe effects on youth and family mental health and on the public school services normally in place. The pandemic has given us "Pause" in so many ways. Why NOT take more time to imagine a route beyond prison or detention for young people in such formative periods of their lives? After all, it is Christmas season. "Suffer the little children to come unto us [or stay among us?], and forbid them not, for such is the kingdom of heaven.

**99. Preston Miller (Vote Against)**

Building a jail creates an incentive to fill it with people. Rather than spending money on tools of punishment, the money should be spent addressing the root causes of problems that would require punishment. Improved education, after school programs, mental health and substance abuse treatments are just a few examples of ways to improve community resilience and prevent crimes and other aberrant behavior. Unlike a new jail, none of these depend on criminal behavior to legitimate their existence; indeed they and others are well studied and proven methods for preventing crime before it happens.

**100. Nnedinma Umeadi (Vote Against)**

CAGES DO NOT HELP OUR CHILDREN OR COMMUNITIES. Creating more infrastructure to send children into cages will only work to introduce and further perpetuate the avalanche of trauma they are currently already living under. It is this avalanche of trauma, unhealed, that creates conditions for interpersonal harm to proliferate. If your goal is actually to reduce and prevent interpersonal harm among and from youth then divert the money, time and other resources being used to build cages to provide resources to sustain the lives of healthy communities, culturally competent wellness programs to help our people make sense of the world and their world, safe spaces to access vulnerability and safe spaces to process and move through grief ...these are just a few things. It's not difficult to be creative with this stuff. Literally so many people do so much work to show that cages do not help, stop ignoring it!

**101. Don Nonini (Vote Against)**

The Durham County Commissioners need to immediately stop your plans to appropriate \$30 million to build a youth detention facility. For these youth, there are alternatives to incarceration that need the money instead in order to disrupt the home-to-prison pipeline being constructed for these youth: community release, counseling, and much more as set out both by the Community Safety and Wellness Task Force and other community members. There is no legal obligations that such a youth detention facility has to be built despite representations to the contrary. Moreover, the diverse Durham community has not been adequately consulted and there appears to be an untimely rush to judgment in pushing through this plan -- and we can certainly use the \$30 million for other ways to assist these youth, protect our streets and families, and more justly involve the community in this decision. NO FUNDS OR SUPPORT FOR A NEW YOUTH DETENTION FACILITY!

**102. Toia Potts (Vote Against)**

There are way more powerful ways to take care of our community. It starts with the village whose mostly impacted. Our children need recreation spaces, healthy outlets, in home programs, etc. Things that will uplift and mold. A detention center will only tear our communities more apart. It's far from what the city. Ask the families and parents what do they need to ensure we all can keep our children and the communities we live in safe.

**103. Selena Levy (Vote Against)**

Community members voices are important and should be heard. You are in your office to represent our voices and our concerns. Our community does not need or want a youth a youth jail.

**104. Jamilia Martineau-Lopez (Delay Vote)**

Hello, I'm a resident of Durham and am appaled at the decision to accelerate a vote on building cages for the children in our community. This change seems suspicious as there has been wide community outcry about spending \$30 million dollars on incarceration instead of wholistic intervention and community care. Don't sweep your community's concerns under the rug of a rushed vote. Give Durham the opportunity to step up for our children by proposing more creative ways to provide healing space, instead of expanding the school to prison pipeline.

**105. Lauren Townsend (Delay Vote)**

I am writing to urge you to delay the vote on the youth detention center, as previously promised. Public input is needed on this issue which will have deep impacts on youth and communities, and elected officials have a responsibility to give the space and time needed for a decision that will have such far reaching consequences.

**106. Veronique Koch (Vote Against)**

Please be transparent and encourage public opinion on this project. From what I understand we are spending money on locking up instead of helping youth. This is not a Durham value.

**107. Grayson Leverenz (Delay Vote)**

We all want what's best for the children. That is the overarching message on both sides of this debate. I'm a big fan of the book Crucial Conversations and it's deeply relevant here.

- 1) Start with the heart (i.e empathy and positive intent)
- 2) Stay in dialogue
- 3) Make it safe
- 4) Don't get hooked by emotion (or hook them)
- 5) Agree on a mutual purpose
- 6) Separate facts from story
- 7) Agree on a clear action plan

Please don't push a vote through without having the conversation. There are answers in our community to help children and parents thrive in NC.

**108. Emily Jirles (Vote Against)**

I am writing you urgently to ask that you not go forward with the proposed \$30 million in funding for the construction of a new youth detention facility in Durham county. Simply put, this is an irresponsible use of funds, which will be put forward to lock away more young people, particularly black youth, in Durham. This is simply continuing on a path that has proven not to work and contributes greatly to the misery of our communities. Instead, this \$30 million should be put forward toward programs that actually go after the sources of crime: poverty, lack of future prospects, abuse and other underlying causes.

The carceral project in America has been proven to be a failure and we should choose instead to spend this money in a way that will actually work. We have an opportunity here to make a different choice. I urge you to reject this proposal for the time being and take the proper time to hear from the community on how we could better spend these funds.

**109. Sara Marshall (Vote Against)**

Building a new youth jail is NOT the alternative this community needs or wants. We need to think about alternatives like community building, wrap around support for our youth and options outside of cages that can actually enhance healing and growth. I urge you to not ignore my own and many others deep concerns around this plan.

**110. Maggie Cech (Delay Vote)**

I'm emailing today with regards to building a new \$30M youth jail. I do not agree with this plan and believe there is absolutely no need for another youth prison. Durham Community Safety and Wellness Task Force unanimously voted that the public should be allowed at least 6 months to comment on the decision to build this prison and by moving up this vote, you are making it very clear that this task force is purely performative. Please delay the vote and allow for public comment and concern so that we can carry out true democracy and the people can determine what really is best for Durham.

**111. Christine Smith (Delay Vote)**

I am disappointed and frustrated that you all have sufficiently disregarded the input from fellow Durham residents and the Durham Community Safety and Wellness Task Force about expanding the Durham youth jail. As our elected officials you all are supposed to uplift and serve every Durham resident including Durham youth. By expanding the youth jail you all are completely ignoring the actual needs of Durham now and Durham's future, our youth. Durham's youth need the support of their communities including their families, friends, neighbors, and you all. Durham's youth need safe spaces and programs in place to nurture their healing and growth into adulthood. This process is not effective if they are caged in a jail.

I urge each and everyone of you to delay your vote and use your power as our elected officials to continue to listen to Durham's communities regarding this vital issue for our future. You may think you have heard us but you need to lean in closer, with open hearts and minds and listen.

**112. Jose Romero (Delay Vote)**



During the town hall on November 18th, for an unforgettable evening, mothers of youth who had been incarcerated and killed, elected officials, and residents of all stripes came together to discuss the beauty and challenges surrounding youth in Durham. We were modeling principled struggle, we were modeling dialogue and trust. And yet, we see that this opportunity, this opportunity to invest in community dialogue has been taken from us. At best, the new construction will be a bandage for a problem that will never be resolved without meaningful community participation. Please halt the approval of the new facility and invest in meaningful dialogue because buildings are meaningless without the power of the people meant to inhabit them.

**113. Danielle Purifoy (Delay Vote)**

Dear Commissioners—Today you have a choice to make about the future of young people for the next 50 years. We have asked you to give us time to go in a different direction than the previous 50 years. You have insisted that the Durham Youth Home keeps young folks safe, but your constituents, including impacted youth, parents, child psychologists, lawyers, scholars, have said that incarceration is an active harm to young folks, and that we have evidence of many other forms of programming and types of spaces we could cultivate to support young folks in the ways that will help them thrive and be accountable to their communities, instead of punishing them and releasing them back into the world without the support or tools they need to make healthy choices. By moving forward with this new facility, you commit to repeating the history that brought us to this place.

Six years of process means little without the meaningful involvement of the constituents you serve. I'm asking that you please grant us six months to support you in developing an alternative, community and youth engaged plan to build a better future for Durham's young people, who will be our next generation of adults in the world.

**114. Tait Johnson (Vote Against)**

I cannot stand for this facility to be built and for the oppression of people in this community to continue. I urge legislators to be loud and denounce these plans that WILL NOT keep our community safe and in fact widen the divides between us. We all deserve to be free! No to the youth jail!

**Comments Received After the Sunday, December 12, 2021 2:00pm  
Deadline Date**

**1. Manju Rajendran (Delay Vote)**

We heard so many vibrant and practical ideas in the room at the 'Youth Heal in Communities Not Cages Town Hall' for how to meet the needs of Durham's children and youth. Thank you so much to those of you who were able to attend.

Durham has already significantly reduced its reliance on youth incarceration, which we know to be developmentally destructive. We know that youth incarceration disproportionately targets Black youth and perpetuates cycles of violence. Locking kids up is harmful and traumatic. With early care and preventative resource access, we could continue and expand on the inspiring current trend toward ending incarceration of children and youth.

We acknowledge the existing youth detention center needs renovation and improvement

and we're not raising concerns about that. But if we believe all Durham's children and youth have a right to the tree of life, we need to fight for better life outcomes than ending up in a youth detention center.

Please delay today's vote and invest energy in hearing from community members. We want to talk about public investments like universal pre-K, instructional assistants in all classrooms, nurses and social workers in all school buildings, and restorative justice education for all of us. We want to talk about investing in schools, libraries, community centers, and neighborhoods. We want to talk about investing in families so children can thrive.

The current proposal for a new, expanded youth jail in Durham has the potential for 60 secure juvenile detention beds, a 300% increase! But at the current facility, the average daily population is no more than 12 on any given day, the average length of stay for youth is 23 days, and youth jail population numbers are on a downward trend. The one-day count of youth in US juvenile justice "residential placement" facilities has dropped by over 60 percent since 2000, and the number of NC youth admitted to detention centers has decreased 65% since 2010.

30 million dollars is a very significant capital expenditure of taxpayer funds that would benefit from an equitable community engagement process. Thank you for slowing down to do right by Durham's children and youth-- they are our everything.

**2. Holly Hardin (Vote Against)**

As a Durham Public School teacher, I ask that you keep Durham's children and youth healthy, safe, and local without having to utilize facilities to cage children. I am troubled by the County's proposal to set aside funds for the creation of a new youth detention center for numerous reasons, including no demonstrated need has been shown, and in fact the average number of youth have been thankfully trending down. So why expand capacity?

Using the argument, we should keep kids in Durham to justify this seems troublesome. Why aren't we looking instead for alternative services in Durham that do not include locking kids up? Including ways to expand support for families and free mental health access for all.

When something goes wrong or seems off in my classroom, I don't simply make new, drastic decisions on my own, I consult my students: "What do they see happening? What do they need to support them and their well-being? What do we need as a class to support our entire community?" I am asking you all to consider such reflection - Why haven't you done similarly and have a public hearing or town hall, so the community is a part of this?

**3. April Parker (Vote Against)**

As a black resident and parent in Durham I want this decision to be made with respect for those like me who want their voices heard. Let us as citizens participate in the democratic process. County commissioners I ask that you do the right thing here and succumb to the pressure of those with power and money to make you not listen to those directly impacted by this decision. We don't need more black and brown children incarcerated, that \$30 million dollars could be used in better ways for their sakes and the community.

**4. Roo Davis (Delay Vote)**

To our hard-working Durham County Commissioners, thank you so much for the tireless efforts you put into serving the communities and people of Durham. Thank you to those who attended the “Youth Heal in Communities Not Cages Town Hall.” As a part of your service to the County of Durham, I urge you to slow down and listen to the community’s profound and dire concerns for our youth and the traumatic consequences they will face upon the construction of a new youth jail.

At the Town Hall, we heard from over 200 people showing up on short notice who overwhelmingly supported an alternative - which, written in the legal language, is an option to explore and enact. I understand that the current building requires renovation, and I am not contesting that need. However, rather than locking kids up in a brand-new facility, that will be disproportionately continuing the cycle of targeting Black youth, we have an opportunity in Durham to build something different and truly restorative in kids’ lives. As youth incarceration is already on the decline, we have the chance to build on this hopeful trend by reallocating money towards preventative care and restorative processes.

As we have seen in history, when there was a call for men and women to be incarcerated separately for women’s safety, there was a huge increase in the construction of women’s prisons. In turn, more women became locked up than ever before in history. Let us not repeat this mistake with our youth. I don’t suggest we neglect these very real safety concerns, but more jails are not an answer to concerns of violence. We can address the concern at hand while turning our focus to prevention and true, safe restoration processes rather than more incarceration and social isolation. We must learn from these lessons and apply them in Durham - creating more jails does not provide safety and care, instead, they cause more incarceration and trauma.

We need true forms of care and safety, like universal pre-K, more social workers and nurses at schools, restorative justice education for everyone and programs for targeted youth and their families/communities. I insist that you delay today’s vote and engage with community members, led by the youth, parents and families with direct experience with youth incarceration, to figure out a meaningful, healing alternative rather than increasing the jail beds for kids in Durham by 300% with this decision. Thank you for pausing and choosing care, restoration, and prevention for our youth and their futures.

**5. Michelle Metzler (Delay Vote)**

I urge you, our elected representatives, to pause and listen, and not push forward without acknowledging and thoughtfully considering delaying the plan to build a \$30M new, expanded youth jail. It is your responsibility to hear community concerns.

**6. Cristina Kovalik (Funding)**

The Durham city council should reconsider its unfounded idea of spending city money on building a new youth jail, especially considering the fact that youth incarceration rates have declined. The money should be spent on community programs that will have a better long-term impact on the Durham such as those proposed by organizations such as Durham Beyond Policing.

**7. Galen Howlett (Vote Against)**

As a Durham resident I strongly object to expanding the youth jail. Millions of dollars in resources should not go into a jail facility. This is a shameful use of resources for our county and not an effective way of reducing crime. If you want to better the lives of citizens in our county, use the funds to help create better access to resources and

opportunity for those who would otherwise turn to crime. Our youth need to be given access to life-improving services not put in a cage and traumatized by a new detention center. Please do not make the heinous choice to use taxpayer money for this purpose.

**8. Betsey Bickel (Vote Against)**

I am alarmed to see that the County Commission is going forward with a vote on the Juvenile jail without the 6 months of hearings the public was promised. I can't imagine why the public would be so thoroughly disregarded on this unless the Board members have some economic stake in the building of this facility. Please reconsider or explain yourselves.

**9. Marcia Morey, NC State House, District 30 (In Favor)**

I am writing in support of funding for a new Durham County Youth Home. Durham's juvenile justice engaged children who pose a risk to community safety, deserve to be placed in an upgraded, state of the art facility. The current youth home is in disrepair, unsafe and not worthy to house children who are ordered into detention by judges.

I understand there is some community opposition to constructing a new youth detention center in Durham. Some think that children under 18 can simply be placed in licensed private care homes, not in a locked, secure facility. Unfortunately, that is not the case with some youth who have been charged with crimes of violence, often times gun violence, which mandates close supervision for community safety. When the age of juvenile jurisdiction was raised to 18, the juvenile justice system now has 16 and 17year-olds, some who may be in need of greater supervision.

Judges do all they can to keep children in their homes, or relative placements. A last resort is secured custody when the law and the facts allow it. It is never done lightly and when detention is ordered we want youth to be in a place as close as possible to their home, attorney and service providers. If Durham fails to build a new Youth Home, our children will be transported to Wake, Greensboro or another detention facility in North Carolina, limiting contact with parents.

The proposed model of Durham's new facility will provide assessment areas, consultation areas for attorneys and their clients. It will be new, clean, light and will focus on providing services for detained youth - all the things we do not currently afford our youth who are in detention.

After 18 years as a Durham judge, I know how desperately Durham needs a new Youth Home. I will be happy to provide further information, if needed.