

Public Comments Received for the February 7, 2022  
Work Session Meeting  
(The Deadline for Comments was Sunday, February 6 at 2pm)

**Comment 1: Ashley Low**

My name is Ashley, and I have been a Durham residence all of my life. I'm highly disappointed by the council ignoring Durham voices by voting to expand the Durham County Youth House Project, which is basically just a nice name for the jail that it is. Expanding cages for children is not what we want. I request that you remedy y'all's mistake by issuing a moratorium on construction and developing an alternative plan for a Youth Wellness and Community Center. We want our dollars spent on a youth community center with activities where kids can hang out, accessible mental health support, and support for public schools.

**Comment 2: Karissa Tucker**

Hi, my name is Karissa and I'm a resident of Durham. I find it extremely disturbing that the city is ignoring input from the community that we do NOT want more or better ways to detain children. That helps no one. Please use these substantial funds toward an unarmed task force of mental health professionals and other resources like stable housing and food for youth in crisis and their families. I'm teeming with better ideas than a youth jail in having thought about this for less than 10 minutes. Do better.

**Comment 3: Ben Wallace**

My name is Ben Wallace, and I am a Durham resident writing to you all to ask that you invest the \$30 million in our communities rather than a youth detention facility. Over the past few years, I have learned that Durham is a beautiful place with kind and thoughtful communities. There is no crime a child could commit that could not be explained by a gap in our social safety net and the absence of adequate public services in our communities. Sending them to a place that almost entirely strips them of their friends and families would only perpetuate our racialized system of inequality.

There is also no legal requirement by the state that Durham has to build a youth detention facility, and certainly not that we need a facility that is planned for 'further expansion.' Please review Durham Beyond Policing and Durham for All's literature.

**Comment 4: Kaitlin Briggs**

I am a Durham resident and am astonished that we would even consider allocating funds for something like this. Our community does not need this. The bottom line is that we should be investing in mental health resources to support our youth. We should not be locking them up.

#### **Comment 5: Candace Burch**

My name is Candace Burch. I'm a Durham Lakewood resident, and mental health administrative support worker, writing to express my disgust and disappointment with your vote to ignore community voices and proceed with funding a youth jail. In December 2021, over 114 Durham residents wrote in over 24 hours asking you to either vote no, or to delay the vote, and you did neither. This is not okay, and betrays logic and compassion alike.

As a community member who sees the need for alternatives to jailing young humans, humans who have unmet needs for health, wellness, and community engagement, I am asking that you place a moratorium on construction of the youth jail, and develop an alternative plan for a Youth Wellness and Community Center. \$30 million could easily be put towards such a project, creating a network of support for our area youth, and creating countless jobs in mental health, social work, mentorship, and the like, fostering foundational relationships for youth who may otherwise slip through the cracks.

Thank you for hearing my concerns. I look forward to seeing you take more conscionable action and rising above the unpalatable move to put kids in cages.

#### **Comment 6: Ari Sanders**

I used to love living in Durham. This is a stupid thing to do with my tax dollars. We need better funded schools and free public transportation. And THIS is what you come up with. Keep this up and I'll move somewhere better... which would suck.

#### **Comment 7: Jessica Hauger**

As a resident of Durham city, I support expanding funding in community organizations, mental health funding, and education. Under no circumstances should our city be spending an additional \$30 million on punitive action, especially for children. Do not fund this youth "home."

#### **Comment 8: Lawrence Koval**

I am writing today as a Durham resident about the Durham County Commissioners unanimously approving funding for a new youth jail. I find it incredible, really, that after two years in a global pandemic, the experience of gun violence nationwide and locally, the continuous impact of police brutality, and the rapid gentrification of Durham that the BOCC could possibly look at the community within Durham and decide that locking up our children—friends, neighbors, community members—is the future we somehow deserve.

It is an insult to the needs of the community for our public funds to be allocated toward something that punishes our youth for needing extra care rather than using those funds to provide said care. There is no possible justification for this that could not be solved by other methods—many of which have been asked for by community members themselves.

For example, these public funds could create an actual youth center that provides activities, community, and caretaking resources. These funds could be used to assist families experiencing financial hardship and food insecurity through providing material resources such as money, food,

clothing, and childcare. This money could be used for houseless families and youth to build homes and give people shelter. It is guaranteed that when people's basic needs are met and stability is created, it is conducive to a happier and healthier community. Being incarcerated is the last thing that anyone needs when what they need is food, shelter, a stable home life, or mental health/medical care.

The BOCC should amend their mistake by issuing a moratorium on construction and pursuing an alternative, such as creating an actual community center or allocating funds to those who need it.

**Comment 9: Kori Higgs**

Young people need the care of their community and opportunities to heal, learn and grow. Not more policing and cages. Put this money towards something that will actually be an investment in the future of the youth in our community, not a dead end.

**Comment 10: Tyler Benjamin**

I'm a Durham resident, Jewish, and a social worker in the criminal legal system. I'm in opposition to the building of a new jail because incarceration almost exclusively adds trauma to someone's life, significantly increasing the chances they will suffer more harm and also act out more harm. If you really want to end juvenile delinquency, don't traumatize juveniles. Give them space and resources to heal from the hardships they have already experienced.

**Comment 11: Heather Higby**

I feel that the Durham community has been ignored in the decisions being made recently, including DPD pay but more importantly, funding for essentially a child jail. I am absolutely furious to see where my tax dollars are going. I've been a homeowner in Durham since 2012, and a resident longer and it sickens me to see my hard earned money being used to harm rather than help. We should absolutely be funding more youth health and care, education, and social programs not detention facilities. I'm also someone who votes every chance I get and I will not be soon forgetting the direction it seems our city is headed is the wrong direction.

**Comment 12: Elana Jones**

Hello, I am writing to you today as a Durham resident. (I live, work, and vote in Durham.) I implore you to reconsider and ultimately reject the building of the Durham Youth Home. "When all you have is a hammer, everything looks like a nail." If this facility is built, children will be sent here, because that will be the option available- and incarceration of children is not in line with my values. Please reconsider and turn away from this plan. I think the best leaders are ones who welcome input from their constituents and are able to change course when new information warrants it.

**Comment 13: Brittany Thomas**

I am a Durham resident, a parent, and a social worker and I support allocating limited resources to youth mental health and social supports and evidence based, culturally competent resources for youth in our community. Detention is not treatment. Detention is not a solution. Detention is

not effective. Structural supports for families, safe and affordable childcare, access to basic needs like healthy food and good schools, and individual and family/caregiver supports (therapists, social workers, substance use treatment, and trauma-informed community resources) are what we should be spending money on. As a tax-paying, voting, and vocal Durham resident that is what I demand.

**Comment 14: Harmony Chavis**

We have seen that putting people in cages does not produce productive and functional society members. The money can be used to help and heal not hurt.

**Comment 15: Christi De Larco**

I am a resident of Durham's Southside neighborhood, I pay property taxes that I object to being spent on creating a larger juvenile jail in our county. I further object to this spending being approved without input from the citizens and taxpayers of this county. This project diverts funds to provide better outcomes and opportunities for youth in our county who might be at risk. We don't need a larger youth jail facility, we need greater funding for mental health treatment for at-risk children and their families, we need greater funding for youth recreation, youth job creation. The commissioners should be asking the citizens and taxpayers of our community what their priorities are, rather than passing funding for large projects without community input.

There are countless studies published in peer-reviewed journals that show juvenile incarceration leads to life-long negative physical and mental health outcomes. How can we doom these children to pay for the rest of their lives for any mistakes they may have made or have been perceived to have made. Isn't it, instead, our mistake, our inhumanity, to sentence them to a punishment that has been shown over and over to harm children. Isn't it our inhumanity to sentence them to poorer health outcomes, poorer mental health and much greater chances of suicidal ideation than those who were not incarcerated as youth. I'm so disappointed that this project is being planned in Durham County and even more disappointed that the County Commissioners are pushing the project forward, despite what Durhamites want, and without any chance for community input.

**Comment 16: Jamie Storyward**

Dear Durham County Commissioners: now is not the time to dedicate \$30 million to a new youth jail. As a resident of Durham, I do not approve of my tax dollars being used this way. Durham's youth deserve us using these resources to support them rather than punish.

**Comment 17: Michelle Osborne**

As a resident of Durham for more than 10 years, I am asking you to please do not use funds to build a new youth facility. Instead, please use these funds to support a Youth Wellness and Community Center.

**Comment 18: Tasseli McKay**

Youth detention, however it is undertaken, has been shown by study after study to be enormously damaging. Please put a moratorium on construction for the Youth Wellness and Community Center and spend the designated funds on non-detention-based solutions for youth.

**Comment 19: Abby Williamson**

I opposed funding a new, expanded youth jail. I'd like to see this funding applied instead to wellness centers for young people to get mental health supports, community-enhancing places for sports and gathering, possibly more outdoor pools for the hot summer months. Locking up youth does not support healing and rehabilitation.

**Comment 20: Megan Kratz**

As one of over 120 Durham residents who requested that you pause the process of building the new youth jail, I am incredibly disappointed by the Commissioners' unanimous decision to ignore community members and instead vote to approve funding for the new youth jail last December. Unless you rectify this mistake by pausing the new youth jail construction process, I will not be voting for any of you in any future election. I understand that you have been quietly pushing through this jail project for some time, but the moment has shifted. There is a growing understanding that what we need, and what it is your responsibility to provide, is resources to thrive: accessible mental health care, excellent schools, beautiful community spaces; nicer cages for incarceration won't cut it.

Please take this opportunity to change course. Instead of spending \$28 million to build more cages for kids, what if we instead built a Youth Wellness Center? It could house councilors and therapists, wraparound family services, and youth recreation and activities, and other things that Durham youth say they need. That would be a step towards a thriving Durham.

**Comment 21: Lucy Worth**

PLEASE do not move forward with the youth housing/jail/confinement project without providing an open process for community and professional input. These children do not need confinement, they need treatment and support.

**Comment 22: Shelisa Howard-Martinez**

I urgently request that you not proceed with funding that would expand the size of the Durham Youth Home. This expansion will only lead to increased reliance on the criminal justice system which has been historically harmful to Black and Brown youth, our families and communities. We need to support more effective and life affirming community infrastructure to address the complex mental, social, physical and spiritual needs of youth. Locking up our future is simply not it.

Youth in Durham deserve more. Adults should be seeking better solutions to support them rather than relying on the same dysfunctional systems. We cannot keep doing the same thing and expect for things to improve.

**Comment 23: Krishni Metivier**

As a Durham resident who is profoundly aware of increasing gun violence in Durham, I am still asking you to come up with a better solution than jail. If it were your child, what would you do? Would try to look for other solutions and do anything to keep your child from a cage and a life marked as a criminal? Have empathy and take action accordingly. Do better.

**Comment 24: Sarah Riazati**

As a Durham resident, I believe our city should NOT invest in expanding the youth home. Youth detention centers are not a good solution, and Durham's elected representatives should be more forward-thinking. Any available budget should be put toward programs that truly support youth wellness and care.

**Comment 25: Annie Creasey**

I am Durham resident and social worker. I want to see our community provide youth with mental health supports and justice that does not include incarceration. I will vote for my leaders according to these values

**Comment 26: Brooke Philpott**

I'm writing as a concerned Durham citizen. I'm disappointed that community voices have been ignored. Please remedy this by issuing a moratorium on construction and developing an alternative plan for a Youth Wellness and Community Center. Durham's youth need community and mental health resources, not to be locked up.

**Comment 27: Andrew Heil**

I am a father, Durham resident, and licensed clinical social worker. Funding affordable housing, meaningful education, and accessible mental health care will support the youth of Durham. Incarceration only disrupts community resiliency, worsens individual health outcomes, and burdens public health.

**Comment 28: Kaitlin Heatwole**

Now is the time for Durham leaders to model a new way of city governance. Expanding the Durham County Youth Home Project is a harmful holdover of the status quo. At the very least, please delay the vote on funding to have more opportunity for community engagement. Those dollars could be spent to address the upstream causes instead of trying to dam up the downstream effects. Social support, education, and resources to promote youth health and wellbeing would be a truly visionary step for Durham to take.

**Comment 29: Beau Fogle**

As someone who was born and raised in Durham, I am incredibly disappointed to see how the Durham County Commissioners are treating their young residents. Throughout my childhood, I saw how loving and welcoming Durham could be. Your actions do not reflect this image. County commissioners are meant to serve our community, not disregard its voice in favor of their own agendas. We live in a country where the voices of the people should matter, and it's disheartening to see this value ignored. To remedy this mistake, we, the community of Durham,

request that you issue a moratorium on the construction of the youth jail and develop an alternative plan. The people, including the youth, are watching you. Do not go forward with the construction of the youth jail.

**Comment 30: Phoebe Gooding**

As a mother of teenage boys, I want to live in a city that will care for my children and their future. The best cities and most desirable places to live in this country have community services for youth as outlets and safe places for them to learn and grow, not jails/detention centers. You have the power to make Durham a desirable place to live for families. Take action on that. No youth jail!

**Comment 31: Annabelle Patton**

30 million dollars is a lot of money. As a Durham resident, I would love the money to be spent on paying school staff adequately (especially paraprofessionals, classroom aides, bus drivers, and mental health professionals). They are doing the work that many parents throughout this pandemic have realized they can't handle doing on their own.

I would also love to see an investment in the library system and the creation of community centers and spaces for Durham youth. In the Durham Youth Listening project, conducted by the City of Durham, youth listed the libraries as some of the few places in Durham County that they actually felt safe and comfortable. Why would we address symptoms of "delinquency" (which has been declining), when we could address the systemic issues at hand and actually help the Durham Youth that are being discussed? Invest in the youth, don't lock them up.

**Comment 32: Madeline de Mahy**

Continuing the expansion of the Durham County Youth Home Project in spite of continued opposition is not the job of our representatives. We implore you to halt the expansion of youth prison beds. This only perpetuates a cycle of violence. There is another way to heal youth, heal communities, and begin to heal these harms. You have the choice, do the right thing.

**Comment 33: Jessica Flemming**

I'll keep this brief. This plan ultimately will not serve Durham. Carceral systems do not help or improve the lives of the people who are foisted into them. Provide support and opportunities, not imprisonment.

**Comment 34: Virginia Wertman**

As a lifelong Durham resident, I am so disappointed in how this project was communicated to the public and handled by our Board of Commissioners. There were near-infinite opportunities divert this prison project and its funding towards non-carceral support systems, like mental healthcare, food and housing assistance, or therapeutic behavioral treatment centers. I understand that some of these features are already included in this building plan, but it is not enough. There is no justification for expanding the number of beds for youth detention, especially when our youth incarceration rates have been declining for multiple years. Please, your citizens are begging you to put this money towards helping the children of this state instead of locking them away. There is so much scientific evidence that our carceral systems are racially biased, hazardous to health,

and traumatizing, so why can't our city lead the way in implementing effective, evidence-based programs that are not based on putting people in cages?

**Comment 35: Connie Raper**

Over the past six years the Durham County Board of Commissioners has quietly gone about approving a \$30 million new and expanded Durham Youth Home. No big public forums, no community survey, no referendum, no input from youth, parents, guardians, educators. Despite the euphemistic name, the Durham Youth Home is an imprisonment facility for children ages 8 to 17. The current youth home has 14 beds and the proposed facility will more than double that to have 36 beds, designed with the potential to add 24 more for a total of 60 jail beds. Our District Attorney's office, elected by the people of Durham, has offered children and youth access to alternative pathways for accountability and healing, so the rate of children sent to secure detention has declined in recent years. There has been no timely reasonable justification for the expansion of jail beds, but if the expanded youth jail is built using precious resources our County needs for youth wellness and care, that's where our Black and Brown children and youth will get sent.

Locking up children and youth is anti-therapeutic. On December 7, 2021 the US Surgeon General issued a rare advisory calling for a swift and coordinated investment in mental health for youth and families, ensuring that "every child has access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally competent mental health care." A week later the Durham County Commissioners voted to push the youth jail through in the face of public outcry instead. Durham's young people say they want a youth community center with activities where they can hang out, accessible mental health support, and support for public schools. The current board of county commissioners has not done the right thing. We do not need to cage our youth community, but provide them a "community" where they can heal and become whole. Think Durham County Board of County Commissioners. Use your best judgement and love for our youth.

**Comment 36: Aneesha Smith**

As a Durham resident that has seen the clear evidence of the harm imprisonment causes, its a slap in the face from the BoC that they would not only pour \$30 million into a facility to imprison more children, but also go on to claim that criticism of that decision would only come from outside of our city. Who would care more about the well being of a city than those of us dwelling within the city? The only way to spend public funding that isn't clear opportunism at the expense of Durham residents is on facilities that will help meet the needs of its residents. A prison would exist only to cause harm within the city, while a community center would give youth healing as an option for the first time.

**Comment 37: Smiti Kaul**

Hi, I am a Durham resident, and I've lived in NC over 10 years. I want to add my voice to request that Durham County please reconsider building a detention center for youth but instead direct funds towards an institution or social services that will help youth develop a community and take care of their mental and social health. A detention center only isolates young people, harms their mental health, and damages them and their peers in the long run. The 30 million dollars going



towards this center would be better put to use by providing subsidized or free health (physical and mental) and community services and opportunities to these youth, their families, and others who are disadvantaged in Durham.

**Comment 38: Chris Nobblitt**

Hello, I am a Durham County resident and I just had a son days ago. I am quite disappointed to hear the commissioners are pushing through such a toxic project when it is clear we could use the resources for a community center and provide actual support for our youth. Your decision signals to me that my child's welfare is of no concern to you, you would rather him be whisked away and subjected to abuse that will follow him and his community for a lifetime. Please reconsider this project and pass an immediate moratorium to stop construction.

**Comment 39: Emily Tucker**

I am a Durham resident strongly against building a new youth detention center. The community needs resources, not to be punished for a lack thereof.

**Comment 40: Abby Lublin**

Durham resident here. I am APPALLED at the commitment to spend \$30million for a new "Youth Home"/confinement center when our youth are in desperate need of (and have been calling for!) life-giving investments in their future. Community centers! After-school activities! Stable housing! Better public transportation! Mentorship! Health care! Instead, Commissioners have chosen to double down on investing in our carceral state. "Not anything about us, without us." When will Electeds engage young people in alternative solutions to their own crises?! How dare this city call itself progressive and refuse to invest in youth wellness, not incarceration.

**Comment 41: Max Parish**

I'm Max Parish, I'm a Durham County resident, and as a Jew, I oppose spending \$30 million on the Durham County Youth Home Project. When I was a kid and I was learning about the holocaust in Hebrew school, one day, my dad told me that my grandparents survived the camps at Auschwitz-Birkenau. He said they were about 5 years old when they were liberated from the camps, and that they were incredibly lucky to have survived. I remember trying to picture what it must have been like for them, living in the cold, and exhausted. No one should have to live like that, I thought.

When my dad and I got home from Hebrew School that day, I remember appreciating my childhood home more than I ever had before. It was a beautiful 2 story colonial with plenty of space for me to spread out, play with my legos and be a kid. And when I wanted to go to the nearby park to play basketball with my friends, I could. A child locked in an expanded cage will not make me or my community safe, nor will it promote their development, and it is not a good use of our county's resources. Children need good homes, access to wealth, and a community that will provide them with opportunities to grow, play and succeed in life: not pay for their detention, which we know leads to trauma and adverse outcomes: both for them and for the community.

Learning about the holocaust and my family's history taught me that as a society, we need to be compassionate to our neighbors, and especially to our young people, and we need to invest in them, not invest in their detention. That is why I am asking that you issue a moratorium on the construction of the Youth Home Project and, instead, invest that \$30 million in a youth wellness and community center, a place where young people are free to come and go, where they can play, and access resources they want.

**Comment 42: Gina Rose**

As a Durham resident, community nurse, and parent, I ask that the BOCC please reconsider the proposed youth detention facility project. 30 million dollars could do so much more healing if spent on housing, mental health, access to health care and education.

**Comment 43: Sierra Bradshaw-Kreimer**

Hello, I am Sierra Bradshaw-Kreimer, a Durham resident. I have lived in the triangle my entire life. Our youth deserve better than this. Put the resources that would go to building more cages for children into building lasting supports for our youth. We need compassionate mental health care, we need affordable housing, and we need equal access to food, shelter, and healthcare. Put these millions of dollars into support, not oppression.

**Comment 44: Jennifer Coleman**

I have been a proud Durham resident for 13 years. My three children have spent their whole lives in Durham. I am frustrated by the lack of care taken in moving forward with the Durham County Youth "Home".

First, the Board of County Commissioners has not been honest and upfront with residents from the beginning of this project. Most recently, in the response to a Community Action Group from 10/21/21, the Board claimed there was a legal obligation to build the new youth home, but during the meeting on 12/13/21, the County Manager said there was a legal obligation to improve or build the youth home. I don't think anybody is remotely opposed to better conditions for the youth that are locked up.

Second, I am thankful to have never been in a jail of any sort. At the same time, I have been in psychiatric institutions, and the conditions, even in the "good ones", are deplorable. The isolation is something I wouldn't wish on anybody. So when I hear you say we don't have throw away children, I wholeheartedly agree. But locking children up doesn't communicate that we are invested in their success. In fact, by expanding the youth home beyond what is even needed (36 vs the needed 26), we are literally investing money in the fact that we will incarcerate more youth in the future. We're investing in our children's failure, not their success. And it shows.

Third, none of this is isolated to incarceration, of course. We need to increase pay for county social workers and improve working conditions so we avoid the revolving door of workers at DSS. We absolutely must invest in universal pre-k through Durham Public Schools and Headstart rather than private daycares that criminalize 3 year olds through suspensions for developmentally normal behaviors with no accountability. We need school social workers and counselors whose

workloads don't exceed professional recommendations. We need to streamline the process and increase availability for mental health evaluations so children aren't spending months untreated on waitlists. Rehabilitation is an admirable goal, but wouldn't it be better if we had no need for it? I am aware that the youth home has moved forward despite our best efforts, despite the lack of community engagement, and despite what the research shows regarding what is best for youth. I hope that this will be a learning opportunity, and as we move forward, we'll be more mindful of prevention rather than treatment.

**Comment 45: Ashley Carter**

Hello! I am very concerned that the funds being spent on this youth home could be better spent. The youth need exposure as well as a message of our belief in their success. Having money spent on these jails for these kids sends a message of our expectation of them to fail. Please reconsider. Thanks

**Comment 46: Imade' Borha**

I am a Durham resident who wants youth to heal in communities not cages. I want the \$30 million dollars to be allocated towards a youth wellness center that would prevent the mental health crises I experienced as a child. When I was a 8th grade student, I started to have stomach pains and headaches in school. No one told me that I was experiencing a panic attack. Because no one told me anything about mental health as a child, I was unprepared for the two suicide attempts and two hospitalizations that happened when I was an adult. We desperately need a youth wellness center that helps young people name what they are feeling and receive appropriate care.

**Comment 47: Anna Benfield**

I am a Durham resident and am deeply concerned about the plans moving forward to build a new youth detention center. Youth need opportunities for healing - which will never happen while they are incarcerated. Please listen to the community and invest in the evidence-based solutions for reducing the cycles of violence and harm that are disproportionately hurting Black and Brown youth.

**Comment 48: Maggie Heraty**

I am a Durham resident, and I am writing as a concerned resident about the vote to approve a new youth jail. The Durham Count Commission should have taken more time to collect community input about this important issue. I stand with Durham Beyond Policing in their call for the Commission to remedy their mistake by issuing a moratorium on construction and developing an alternative plan for a Youth Wellness and Community Center. Youth Heal in Communities Not Cages.

**Comment 49: Cassie Hamrick**

I am writing this message as a Durham resident as well as community mental health practitioner. I have served Durham residents - children, adolescents, and adults - as a Licensed Clinical Mental Health Counselor in the Lakewood neighborhood for many years. As a professional who has worked extensively with under-resourced and at-risk youth, I implore Durham County

Commissioners to issue a moratorium on construction of the Durham County Youth Home project and to instead develop an alternative plan for a Youth Wellness and Community Center, as has been requested by the young people of Durham.

Locking up children and youth is anti-therapeutic. On December 7, 2021 the US Surgeon General issued a rare advisory calling for a swift and coordinated investment in mental health for youth and families, ensuring that “every child has access to high-quality, affordable, and culturally competent mental health care.” A week later the Durham County Commissioners voted to push the youth jail through in the face of public outcry instead. Truly, this vote broke my heart, and frankly caused me to lose trust in my county government’s ability or willingness to protect the most vulnerable of its constituents. At this time I believe the County Commissioners have the opportunity to redeem themselves by issuing a moratorium on construction of and revoking funding for the Durham Youth Home Project, and redirecting those funds toward resources that actually support youth to keep them healthy and out of incarceration, including a free and accessible community center with activities where Durham’s youth can spend time and safely access resources, accessible mental health support county-wide, and support for Durham County public schools.

**Comment 50: Rahel Petros**

When has locking up kids ever been the answer? This is not how you invest in Durham's youth, and definitely not how you honor the legacy of Black people who built this city up just to be priced out of it. First ICE, now Durham locking up kids too?

**Comment 51: Faye Koenigsmark**

I am a Durham resident writing in opposition to the proposed new Durham County Youth Home. I am among the other 114 Durham residents who submitted a public comment for the meeting on December 13, 2021. I stayed up the entire evening to watch the meeting, and I was both disappointed and angered by how the agenda item surrounding the new youth jail was handled. I have outlined my frustrations below.

First, it was upsetting to have 114 powerful statements reduced to just a 1-2 sentence summary; while you have insisted on the importance of community input for this process, you seemed to have no problem suppressing our public comments that evening. You did, however, make time to read a full statement from Representative Marcia Morey who was in support of the new youth jail. It's also striking to note that no Durham residents submitted a public comment in support of the new youth jail, but still the vote was pushed forward.

Second, as if it wasn't hurtful to have our voices disregarded, one Commissioner implied that the sea of comments received was from outside of Durham. I have been a Durham resident for 7 years. Durham is my home. And as such, I want more for the youth in my community than a youth jail. Please do not question our residency solely because our comments are in opposition to your proposed plan.

Finally, of course, the most heartbreaking part of the evening was to have the Durham County Commissioners unanimously vote to approve funding for building the new youth jail, despite the public outcry. Despite this disappointing outcome, I am writing today to say that I will be continuing to watch this process, and as a community, we will not tolerate our voices being disregarded. I am requesting that you remedy this mistake by issuing a moratorium on construction of the new youth jail, and instead develop an alternative plan (with the community) for a Youth Wellness and Community Center. At the "Youth Heal in Communities Not Cages" Town Hall in November 2021, residents presented a list of alternatives they would like to see their tax dollars spent in lieu of a new youth jail. These suggestions included increased mental health services in the DPS system, activities to keep youth engaged, career building skill development, wrap around services for youth and their families impacted by the carceral system, and so much more. I urge you to pause and take some time to discuss these alternatives with the community. While some contracts for the new youth jail may have been signed already, a pause in the process is a small price to pay for ensuring the best future for youth in Durham. We hope you consider working with us as a community to develop a non-carceral, supportive service for youth. Thank you for taking the time to read my comment.

**Comment 52: Carolina Peterson**

As someone who works with teenagers in Durham, I strongly disapprove of this new facility. There are alternatives to jailing children that should be provided. I am proud to live in a progressive city but this is a gross step backwards and will disproportionately affect BIPOC children.

**Comment 53: Martin Witchger**

I live in East Durham and deeply believe in alternatives and reforms in our criminal justice system.

I joined other fellow community members in voicing concern in the commissioners votes to approve funding to expand the new Durham County Youth Home Project. I urge you to reconsider, delay, and consider other alternatives that help rehabilitate and facilitate connection among youth not cages.

**Comment 54: Katie Starr**

We need to priority care in Durham!!!! We do not need a new youth jail. This is not the solution.

**Comment 55: Catherine Oliver**

I am a Durham resident writing in to inform you that I am extremely disappointed by your actions. We the people of Durham have spoken and we have said that we do not want our tax dollars to be spent on a new youth jail. It is extremely disheartening and disappointing that you the commissioners have chosen to completely disregard and ignore our voice. I ask that you listen to us. There is still time. I ask that a moratorium is issued on construction of the new youth jail. Instead of a youth jail, I ask for the development of a Youth wellness and community center to help our youth. Please work with us, the Durham community. Thank you for taking the time to read my comment.

**Comment 56: Chelsea Earles**

I am a single parent, childcare provider and 25 year Durhamite. My 14 year old is 100% from here. Helping her grow in these often difficult years, it is so clear to me that there are two approaches we can take toward our young people, a nurturing approach or a punitive one. We can encourage connection or shatter it. As parents and people who work with children we make these decisions every day. As commissioners you still have a chance to make the right choice for our kids and our community. Please reconsider and ask young people what they need to thrive and stay connected to their community. It's absurd that the body that helps fund our crumbling and impossibly understaffed schools is choosing instead to spend \$30 million to be able to lock up more Black and Brown kids. Please don't rob our young people in this way. Thank you.

**Comment 57: Victoria Morton**

I am an elementary school teacher and parent living and working Durham. As someone who cares deeply about the Durham community and who has a background in child development, I can say with certainty that 30 million dollars should be spent on education, housing, food programs and mental health programs NOT on expanding the Durham Youth Home project. When we think about children who thrive, we think of children who are food secure, have safe housing, clothing to keep them warm and comfortable, access to social and emotional support, and schools that support their growth. No thriving community has come from punishing, and definitely not incarcerating youth! Spending 30 million dollars on the Durham County Youth Project will have a negative impact on our community, and especially on Durham youth. 30 million dollars would be better spent supporting children in the form of mental health care, stable housing, food programs and high quality education. These programs reflect our community's needs, the youth home does NOT. Thank you for your time and support in channeling these 30 million dollars towards supporting youth in the form of housing, mental health, food, and high quality education.

**Comment 58: CP Prince**

I am writing as a Durham resident to say that \$30 million for a new youth jail is not how we should spend our public dollars. After watching the last Board of Commissioners Meeting I was disappointed by the neglect of community voices in the decision to approve funding and request that the Board issue a moratorium on construction and developing an alternative plan for a Youth Wellness and Community Center. I would like to see those public dollars spent on affordable (not carceral) housing, public transit, and services for disabled community members. Thank you.

**Comment 59: Nat Lazakis**

This message is to ask the Durham County Commissioners to issue a moratorium on the construction of a new youth jail. In recent months, parents, youth, and other concerned members of our community have convincingly been arguing that incarceration is a harmful way to address problems faced by youth, and they've urged elected officials to invest funds in a Youth Wellness and Community Center instead. Since moving to Durham in 2001, I've observed how community health and well-being depend on elected officials listening to --not disregarding-- the perspectives of people directly impacted by their policies. Given the many serious disadvantages of incarcerating youth, please halt the new prison's construction immediately.

**Comment 60: Naan Ewool**

I am so disappointed that I'm here writing yet another comment about the same issue. I'm disappointed that as a Durham county resident, I don't feel like my community's input, our frustration, our desires for our public dollars are not respected or taken into account by our elected officials. Our young people deserve better than a \$30 million dollar youth jail. They deserve a wellness center, one with wraparound non-carceral services - with comprehensive and affirming mental health care, with abundant resources, with space for them to relax and hang out without fear of being kicked out or harmed. They deserve that and so much more, as do their families and we have the chance to make those desires a reality! I am disappointed by your resolve to push forward with this youth jail, but I am not disheartened. I know that our community is what keeps us safe, not punitive measures that criminalize youth. That same community is watching how our County officials make decisions and we will not stop fighting until our youth have options for accountability, growth, and healing in our county.

**Comment 61: Samantha Clarke**

We do not need to be spending more money on jails! Instead we should be investing in our communities.

**Comment 62: Damon Williams**

As a resident of Durham, I am disappointed and dismayed that our concerns have been overshadowed. Our public dollars have senselessly been fast tracked into the so called Durham Youth Home, which sloppily pastes a euphemism over this carceral project that will only bring further harm. We are watching. We continue to demand the diversion of these funds into non-carceral solutions that meet the actual needs of Durham's youth as they understand them. These funds could easily be used to address structural issues that prevent harm before it starts, rather than being a white liberal feel-good version of the same harm-multiplying, all-American punitive jail system.

**Comment 63: Kylie Foley**

We get to decide what's a problem, and who is human. Kids should not be counted out, and kids don't need to be reformed. They need to be loved and listened to. With humor, lightness, flexibility, we can be there for kids in the BEST way by not building a jail. No new jails in Durham.

**Comment 64: Christopher Dragga**

I've been a resident of Durham for almost eight years now and active politically through much of that. Building this youth detention center is a mistake, investing in deepening our dependence on incarceration rather than trying to free ourselves from it. This is the opposite of what we need, and I'm frankly disappointed in all of the country commissioners for reaching this point without seriously considering alternatives, instead trying to paint the youth prison with an air of progressivism. Our youth deserve better.

**Comment 65: Ian Kilgore**

Are you public servants who work to enact the will of your constituents, or smug technocrats who view your community's comments as a tedious nuisance? Don't patronize us.

**Comment 66: Chelsea Amato**

Expanded cages for children is NOT how we want our public dollars spent. We are watching, and are profoundly disappointed by your actions. We will not tolerate community voices being disregarded. We request that you remedy this mistake by issuing a moratorium on construction and developing an alternative plan for a Youth Wellness and Community Center. PLEASE put the money into a youth community center with activities where Durham's youth can hang out, accessible mental health support, and support for public schools.

**Comment 67: Kaitie Yeoman**

I've been a Durham resident since 2018 and plan on being part of the community for the long haul. Community is the answer to our problems, not cages. Connection and support, safe housing and adequate care for physical and mental health, education and respect. We say we're a progressive city but we are what we spend our money on and a new juvenile prison center isn't progressive.

**Comment 68: Paul Wynkoop**

As a Durham resident, I've seen how communities have been torn apart by the criminal legal system. The police, courts, and prisons are all paramount in creating an unjust, unequal, and inhumane society, and if Durham claims to be "different", we cannot continue to engage in our support of this youth jail. We should invest in quality schools, violence intervention programs, and summer programs for youth.

**Comment 69: Anna Mullen**

Hello. I am a disabled caregiver and Durham resident. I study psychiatric incarceration and the effects of carceral design and architecture on disabled folks. Why are you doing business with Moseley Architects? Specifically with Todd Davis, an ex-cop with extensive documented affiliations and bargains with primarily white regional police forces? The overlap of the resources you want to offer Durham youth and the resources kids are asking for can be provided without incarceration. The children have already taken it upon themselves to show you how. It will be far more embarrassing for Durham's reputation to continue with this build than to change course now. It will be far more expensive to deal with the psychosocial fallout and betrayal this facility will produce quietly after years of operation than it would be to cancel the project now. The consequences of what you are building cannot be counted, accounted, or budgeted for. Why double down on a failure of imagination when teen organizers have asked for exactly what they need?

**Comment 70: Jose Romero**

An alternative to incarceration and detention is possible. This money could be used to purchase residential units that could become housing rather than detention units that are intended for temporary stays. What if we created a task force of only formerly incarcerated youth to develop these solutions. What if we give ourselves the opportunity to see that Durham has always been a visionary city and now is the time for us to see.



**Comment 71: Bjorn Pedersen**

I'm writing today to convey my disappointment that our county commission continues to funnel money into failed systems of punishment instead of investing that money back into the community. It can hardly be said that we do not have other needs to be met. Every night, hundreds of Durham residents experience homelessness, and many more are housed only by remaining in dangerous living situations or by putting off other vital expenses, like food and medicine. Youth act in accordance with the values they see embodied in society. To prioritize punishment over the basic needs of your citizens tells them everything they need to know about what and who society values and you can hardly expect them to care for or about others when you so clearly set an example that demonstrates that the most powerful people in our community can't be bothered to do so themselves.

**Comment 72: AJ Crews**

As a Durham resident of many years I've firsthand seen the way community groups and youth programs change youth and help them. Children deserve to feel loved and supported in all walks of their journey. I know I just want safe places for the kids to be. Cages and jails traumatize them. Building this jail will make the kids feel like the city has really given up on them. They need love, funding in community programs, their schools. They don't need to be locked away. They thrive when they have opportunities to create art, play sports, get a new trade. Sit down with youth groups, youth organizations and let everyone come up with a plan for keeping youth and the community safe. Please place this money elsewhere. Please stop building this jail. Youth deserve to be treated with grace and understanding. This is not representing grace and understanding. Many children have been displaced due to gentrification and Covid. They need to be wrapped in love and support by their loved ones. Not caged by their city. Our children are not a commodity, factors in a business plan or criminals. Durham is supposed to be better than this. Durham is better than this.

**Comment 73: Karen Tarkulich**

I'm writing to express that I'm disappointed that the Durham County Commissioners disregarded community voices and plowing ahead to approve \$30M to build a new youth detention center. I do not want Durham prioritizing funding how to keep children locked up. I'm disappointed and expect transparency, communication, and engagement on matters concerning the health and well-being of our community.

**Comment 74: David Kreimer**

Hello, I am David Kreimer, a Durham County resident. I have lived in the Triangle for 29 years. Our youth deserve better than this. Please put the resources that would go to building more cages for children into building lasting supports for our youth. We need compassionate mental health care, affordable housing, and equal access to food, shelter, and healthcare. Please put these millions of dollars into support, not oppression.

**Comment 75: Blue Miller**

I'm a Durham resident and a Durham Public Schools Employee. I'm concerned about the \$30 million being invested into a youth home. While I understand that our justice system is not going

anywhere for the time being and our young people need a safe and high quality building, I am wondering why such a huge amount of money is being put into a building that locks kids up (and I know also provides them with services) and that same amount of money isn't being poured into a program to heal our young people and prevents them from entering such a system in the first place. Our youth need investments in their healing, not in their incarceration.

**Comment 76: Meghan O'Rourke**

As a Durham resident and preschool teacher, I am disappointed in the decision to move forward with the plan to approve funding for a new youth detention center. Punishment does not change a child's behavior; community support, providing the tools for social/emotional development, and space to explore their interests does. Instead of spending \$30 million on a detention center which will only serve to cause further harm to the youth inside its walls, the money would be better spent on mental health services, a youth community center, access to healthy food, and support for families/caregivers. Durham should invest in healing its children, not further punishing them.

**Comment 77: Millie Rosen**

Hi, I am a teacher here in Durham and I'm pretty appalled at the County Commission using \$30 million for this project instead of investing it in public schools. That would make so much more of a difference than putting more kids in jail. Please use the money to give us the resources to meet kids' needs in education, rather than incarceration.

**Comment 78: Martiza Mendoza**

As a resident of Durham, I'm incredibly disappointed that you actively ignore the people you represent and decide to waste \$\$ building a system that a) we have asked repeatedly to not go forward, b) does not help our youth in any way and actually leads to more death and harms the physical, spiritual, financial and mental health of our youth, their families and networks. These prison systems do not improve the lives of anyone, not to mention how they disproportionately target youth of color. Our youth need community centers, holistic care that prioritizes their wellness and growth, not penalizes them and restricts their growth and care. We are watching and will not back down. Do better. Stop spending our public dollars without our consent. Do not expand this institution and let us, residents of Durham, share the ideas we have to build the future we deserve. As a resident of Durham, I demand to have a voice in how I get to live, how our youth are cared for in the city they live in.