

**November 15, 2024**

The Honorable Michael Kehoe, Governor-Elect  
State of Missouri  
State Capitol, Room 224  
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Governor-Elect Kehoe:

Congratulations on the results of the election. We are excited for the future with you at the helm and look forward to working with you in any capacity needed to provide local context on statewide issues. I know my fellow mayors share this sentiment.

Prior to the election, a group of Missouri mayors spoke of our hopes for our state moving forward. Our top priority, like yours, is to ensure that our residents are safe. To that end, we wanted to reach out to you directly to begin a dialogue about public safety in our metropolitan areas. We know this is important to you.

Gun violence continues to affect Springfield and has remained the number one priority for the Springfield Police Department. Across the state, we are particularly concerned with how it is affecting our youth. Of 133 shooting investigations in 2023 in Springfield, 21 of the suspects were age 18 and under; 66 of them were age 24 and under. In Kansas City, 15 children under the age of 18 have lost their lives this year alone, while another 14 children have been identified as suspects in homicide investigations.

Springfield's City Council adopted its legislative package November 4, 2024 that again included a request to amend State law to match Federal law regarding the possession of handguns by minors. This has been included in our legislative package on multiple occasions. We hope it is something you consider as we know that throughout the campaign, you expressed a desire to establish a statewide approach to address violence. We welcome the opportunity to collaborate with you. While crime in much of the state is falling due to community-specific and community-centered enforcement strategies, there remains a need to work together to put forward the best possible evidence-based solutions to drive crime lower.

Over the summer and fall, reports indicated numerous threats at schools across our state. From Nixa, to Kansas City, to Columbia, and St. Louis, these threats represent a trend that demands our attention. This led to temporary lockdowns of those schools in some instances and deep fear and anxiety for students and their families. We owe it to ourselves and our state to protect our children. For us, this means changing Missouri's laws to establish a prohibition of juveniles possessing a handgun mirroring federal law. As noted above, the City of Springfield recently adopted this by resolution as part of its legislative priorities. The concept is simple. If you are under 18, you should not have a handgun.

Beyond this, we would welcome the opportunity to work closely with Commissioner Eslinger and the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education to establish better reporting that helps us triage resources when students bring a weapon to school. Right now, the process of reporting and responding to incidents involving a weapon at school or significant disturbances is sporadic at best. Notably, in our

conversation examples surfaced where a handgun had been removed from a school by law enforcement with no additional community notice required.

For the sake of our children, we first need to shine a light on what is actually happening at schools. This requires improving our ability to inform families. We believe there should be a public database that captures that the incident occurs and allows parents to view that information, while protecting individual privacy. We all wish to intervene in ways that help the student, and ultimately their family, be successful but we cannot address that which we do not know. An informed public is a safer public.

The above are just two examples of solutions we believe would make our cities and state safer. We have others and would like the opportunity to convene with you, your team, and our local law enforcement to strategize next steps. Clearly, the public sector cannot fix every problem. However, the public sector is well suited to both understand and decrease risk through wraparound services in partnership with community organizations. Together, we believe we can make Missouri safer and improve the lives of residents. We hope that, as you convene your cabinet and your advisors, you will consider us willing partners and active collaborators to address public safety, and specifically, youth violence.

Sincerely,

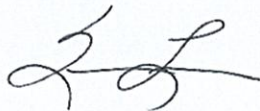


Ken McClure,  
Mayor, City of Springfield

Co-signed:



Barbara Buffaloe  
Mayor, City of Columbia



Quinton Lucas  
Mayor, City of Kansas City



Tishaura Jones  
Mayor, City of St. Louis