

Council Members' Letter in Support of the Reappointment of the Honorable Toddrick Barnette as Commissioner of the Office of Community Safety

This letter is a response to the recently published public memorandum City Council's Vision for Community Safety and Toddrick Barnette's Failure to Meet that Vision, entered into the record by the Council President on April 15th. It purports to speak for the whole body on a matter on which we are closely divided but does not speak for the 46% of us who support Commissioner Barnette's reappointment. As confirmed by our City Clerk from the dais, neither the City Charter nor the Council's own rules grant the Council President an inherent right to speak for this body.

When the office of Council President is used in this fashion, it undermines the effectiveness of that office and makes it harder for the institution to function as it should. All of us depend on the Council President to be an impartial facilitator of our process. That's especially important when the Council is closely divided, as it is today. We all expect Council leadership to be exercised fairly, consistently, equally and without favor. The Council President's memo fell short of that standard.

It is vital that the public record reflects the full scope of Commissioner Barnette's tenure, including his leadership through the two biggest public safety crises this city has faced since 2020, and the Council President's letter does not capture the full picture.

On back-to-back days — August 26 & 27, 2025 — our city experienced two mass shootings: one outside Cristo Rey and the horrific killings at Annunciation. In both instances our first responders rushed to the scene to render aid, secure the scene, and ensure the safety of the public and the dignity of the victims. That coordinated, immediate response happened under this Commissioner's watch. When our city was under assault from our own federal government during Operation Metro Surge, our Emergency Operations Center ran 24 hours a day, seven days a week for months. Rather than descending into chaos, our city rose to the occasion. Under Commissioner Barnette's leadership, that massive emergency operation remained coordinated and effective. Minneapolis became a beacon of resistance for the entire world.

The letter also fails to mention results. Homicides in Minneapolis are down. Shootings are down. Carjackings are down 73% from 2021. North Minneapolis has recorded its lowest shooting victim count ever. The department has grown in numbers and diversity from 560 officers and on track to have 700 by 2027, with a nationally recognized training program. Significant progress has been made in clearing the backlog of police conduct review cases. Community safety ambassadors are expanding to Uptown. The Behavioral Crisis Response team is up and running. Under his tenure, 911 call answer times have improved by 10%, and the City successfully opened the Lake Street Safety Center to provide a one-stop shop for community resources. He has also successfully broken down department silos, notably collaborating with the Health Department to install NARCAN vending machines at fire stations.

Regarding the MPD budget overrun, under the City's own framework it is Finance and Property Services, not department heads, that is responsible for flagging overruns to this Council; Finance and Property Services did exactly that in the second quarter 2025 report. When this Council raised concerns about the Salem contract, Neighborhood Safety changed course. When the community raised concerns about OUR Rescue, the Office of Community Safety (OCS) removed them from consideration. We view this as responsive leadership. OCS has also been consistent in its communications: a bi-monthly public dispatch, regular quarterly testimony to the Public Health and Safety Committee, and responses to numerous Legislative Directives. The volume of requests directed at a department as complex as OCS will inevitably generate some frustration, but the answer is to keep working together, not to disrupt the continuity of leadership on which hard-won progress depends.

Commissioner Barnette's qualifications and accomplishments speak for themselves. That is the record we are voting on and why we support his reappointment.

Respectfully,



Elizabeth Shaffer, Ward 7



Pearl Warren, Ward 5



Michael Rainville, Ward 3



Jamison Whiting, Ward 11



LaTrisha Vetaw, Ward 4



Linea Palmisano, Ward 13