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Seattle City Council Confirmation Questions for Written Response
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1. What makes you want to be in this position?
Seattle is at a pivotal juncture in its approach to community safety. Here in Seattle, I believe we have a unique opportunity to co-create with our community a legal system that works for the people we serve. I believe in the court's mission —it is fundamental to our democracy and our community well-being. I am inspired by the court's vision to be an innovative and accessible court that works collaboratively to serve our diverse community, confronting implicit and explicit bias at all levels of the criminal legal system.

My passion lies in delivering service to the public, and this position is a great match for my skills and experience. I am an experienced lawyer, executive leader, and diversity, equity, and inclusion champion. I have extensive experience at the Washington Department of Licensing (DOL), at the Attorney General's Office (AGO), and at Pierce County Superior Court (PCSC) leading complex organizations through transformative change.

I am skilled at building systems within organizations to understand where systemic oppression exists in our services, and to reimagine delivering those services with the communities we serve. I am confident in my ability to lead the court as we work toward our goal of transforming to a courthouse where people leave us in a better place in their lives than when they arrived.

As Court Administrator, I will also have the opportunity to lead the court through the $40 million Municipal Court Information System (MCIS) Replacement Project. At DOL, I was the executive sponsor for many major technology modernization efforts valued at over $110 million in public investment. I understand the need to thoughtfully position the organization to successfully deliver and implement the project. These projects represent a unique opportunity to shift the court to be more efficient, effective, and equitable. This project represents an opportunity to look at every process and simplify and reimagine them in a way that benefits our clients, employees, and the public at large.

The role of Court Administrator allows me to bring my passion for equitable public service and my extensive experience in supporting and leading organizations through change to a court that is eager to be on the cutting edge of an innovative, anti-racist, community-driven approach to the legal system.

2. What do you want to accomplish during your tenure? How will you know if you're successful?
Success will mean we have co-designed a system that is transparent and trusted by the people we serve. Our goal at Seattle Municipal Court (SMC) is to create a truly community-centered court that supports people to get to a better place in their lives. This means that we have work to do to reform our system rooted in systemic racism.

I am excited about the opportunity to take the court's vision and bring it to life. To that end, I would need to accomplish the following in short order:
- Build on the court's work to become a community-centered court by working with community partners, stakeholders, and staff to reimagine our programs and services through an anti-racist, equity-based lens.

- Create a robust customer experience and engagement program that would center all decisions, processes, and projects around court users and the public.
- Build and sustain efficient and effective organizational systems so that the court can deliver on its transformative vision by working across the department.
- Successfully implement the MCIS 2.0 project.
- Develop a robust performance measurement program that provides transparency and accountability to all of the court's operations.
- Ensure each leader and employee has the knowledge, skills, tools, and resources to examine each aspect of our work through an anti-racist, equity-based lens.
- Continue the court's work in building and sustaining a vibrant and engaged workplace where employees can meaningfully contribute to our collective work and grow their careers.

As these items are implemented, the court will have a strong foundation to drive innovation and an effective means to deliver on its vision. From there, we will continue to strengthen our partnerships with those we serve so that we keep evolving and improving our processes and programs. We will be a court on the leading edge of change.

I will know I am successful when our judges, employees, community partners, and stakeholders demonstrate in their actions that they feel valued, included, accountable, and empowered to create barrier-free access to justice, with fair and equitable outcomes. I will know the court's operations are successful when our performance data indicates that we are efficient and effective with our resources, that the court users' experience was positive, meaningful, and supportive, and that we have earned the trust and respect of the community.

3. How has your previous experience prepared you for this job?
I have centered my career around serving others. My experience as an attorney and a leader have given me a unique perspective on the Court Administrator role and this opportunity. I will draw on my rich experience and deep knowledge of the law and leadership to serve the court, the city, and the community at large.

When I graduated law school in 2005, I began serving individuals in navigating the legal system. First, I served as an AmeriCorps Vista Attorney in the MLK Jr VISTA Corps here in Seattle; the focus of which is to dismantle institutional racism. My job was to represent workers in the unemployment benefits system. After successfully completing my VISTA year, I went on to represent individuals in the criminal legal system as defense counsel, and as Court Appointed Special Advocate in child abuse and neglect cases. In these roles, I always strived to help individuals navigate and understand the state systems or court systems, which were confusing, discriminatory, and seemed designed to ensnare people in a cycle of repeated contact with the system. After seeing first-hand the frustration and harm this caused for my clients, I realized that the most effective way for me to help people navigate systems is to build a better system.

From there, I represented court administration and court programs and later state agencies. I thrived in these positions because I had the ability to effect real change. I supported these organizations in transforming their processes to best serve their constituents. I first represented probation counselors, court administrators, and guardians ad litem at Pierce County Juvenile Court (PCJC). There, I leveraged my role to advocate for moving truancy cases, which at the time led to the incarceration of children for

failing to attend school, from being handled by the prosecutor's office to being handled by the school districts through diversion programs and community truancy boards. BIPOC communities were the most likely to be caught up in this aspect of the pipeline to prison. This change kept children and their families together and focused on addressing their needs in their community. I also assisted in court improvement projects aimed at reducing disproportionate outcomes to BIPOC communities through new and existing court programs.

The Attorney General's Office took note of my work at PCJC and hired me to serve as an Assistant Attorney General. There, I advised and litigated on behalf of large state agencies. I used my role as an advisor to support changes in our clients' systems in order to deliver more equitable results. I served as a public speaker, educator, and change agent around understanding the impact of explicit and implicit bias within our clients' organizations and court systems.

I am most proud of the work I accomplished within the AGO and the legal community. I developed and delivered the first AGO training on implicit bias and was sought out repeatedly to present on this topic across the state for other organizations. As a result, AG Ferguson wrote a letter to the editor of the Washington State Bar Association Magazine urging its membership to learn about the impact of implicit bias. This implicit bias training led to transformational changes in AGO culture and operations and was the foundation for additional diversity training, policy changes, and the development of employee resource groups.

My ability to lead through a race and social justice lens, as well as lead people through significant change, was what led me to the role of Deputy Director at DOL in 2018. I joined the agency in the aftermath of a heartbreaking scandal that seriously harmed members of our community and tore families apart. The public was outraged and deeply hurt by DOL's actions.

When I arrived at DOL, the agency had a "public safety" ethos that was ultimately rooted in distrust of poor, BIPOC communities. We needed to transform our culture and our service model to one that prioritized helping all Washington residents live, work, drive, and thrive. DOL is a complex regulatory agency with a broad book of business; it required the ability to work across an organization with 1,500 employees and to partner with community to redefine our purpose and to earn the trust of those we served.

During my time with DOL, I continued to keep individual customers in the forefront of my mind. Because I had the experience of representing individuals in similar administrative systems, I had the empathy and compassion to imagine the consequences of my decisions on individual people. This motivated me as we built systems to support our work, our employees, and ultimately our customers.

In each of these experiences, I demonstrated my ability to lead teams and organizations in delivering accessible, effective, efficient, and equitable services. I am well prepared to lead the court through this crucial period of change. I aim to bring my expertise building systems of accountability to underserved populations to our court's work and build on our culture of service excellence to create a transparent, accountable, welcoming environment for both staff and members of the public.

4. **Are there any opportunities for improvement that you've seen thus far in your observations of how SMC functions?**

One of the greatest challenges we are facing at SMC, and at organizations across the criminal legal system, is a lack of trust with the communities we serve. We have an opportunity to work alongside communities most impacted by the legal system to create transformational change. As we work to undo systemic racism, we can do better to both help people and make the system easier to navigate.

To design a system that works for the people we serve, our court must invest in and develop overarching community engagement and customer experience strategies. Our services need to be developed and delivered with an understanding of what our clients need and the barriers they face. The court has implemented several community engagement strategies already, including conducting focus groups and a court user survey last year, and our ongoing restorative healing circles convened with community members. Building on these efforts and weaving mechanisms for open dialog with the people we serve into our daily operations will be key to our success in creating an anti-racist court.

One critical aspect of building trust will be creating performance measures, public data dashboards, and other systems of accountability to the public regarding the court's efforts to achieve its vision. While the court already measures and publishes many metrics, its ability to easily analyze trends or examine outcomes for underserved populations has been limited by outdated technology. SMC can improve transparency by improving the data we collect and measuring and reporting outcomes. For example, the court has recently developed and published new performance metrics for its Probation Services, and I look forward to building on that success across other service areas. Taking a coordinated approach to support the MCIS Replacement Project will help us improve our ability to analyze our impact through data.

5. **How do you approach organizational management? How would you describe your leadership style?**

I am a systems thinker, and I manage organizations by looking at the organization as a whole. I create environments where everyone can thrive by co-creating a shared vision of success, establishing a roadmap and measures for achieving the vision, building the systems necessary to support our work, and celebrating the milestones along the way. I will ensure we are one court, with one mission, heading towards our vision of being an equitable and accessible court of the community.

As a leader, I am a creative problem-solver, curious learner, and engaged team member. I put people, employees, the public, and stakeholders at the center of my decision-making and hold myself and others accountable for our success. I create collaborative environments where employees actively participate in improving our services and systems, and our workplace. I inspire and rely on my teammates at all levels of the organization to lend their talents and expertise in service of our mission. My commitment to teamwork and transparency has been repeatedly recognized and celebrated through performance awards, promotions to significant leadership roles, and has been reflected in overwhelmingly positive employee feedback through anonymous employee engagement surveys.

6. **How do you approach making anti-racist progress in an institutionally racist criminal legal system and government? Can you talk about your experiences in trying to dismantle institutionally racism and how you have succeeded?**

I approach making anti-racist progress by focusing on three areas: delivering services and programs to the public, internal operations, and the workplace culture. Across these three areas, I seek to

understand the history and assumptions behind policies, procedures, and processes to identify where white supremacy culture is at work. Further, I seek to understand how people experience these three areas and to know where people are excluded, harmed, underserved, or overserved.

Services to the Public: I have had great success in making anti-racist progress in providing services to the public by partnering closely with those we serve. The criminal legal system as it is today was designed to control and subjugate BIPOC communities. This was the same design of our state's regulatory agencies. The legacy of this was evident at DOL: when we examined the history and reasoning behind different policies or procedures, it was clear that the decisions were rooted in massive distrust of the people we served, specifically poor people and people of color. By making the racist reasoning behind the system visible, we were able to make progress going from a system based in distrust to a system based in partnering with those who were most harmed.

An example of this was when DOL re-examined what customer's must provide as part of their application for an ID or driver's license. An ID or driver's license is fundamental to a person's ability to live in our society. A state-issued identification is needed to bank, obtain employment, access health care, register for school, access credit, etc. By not being able to meet the application requirements, our customers are essentially excluded from these essential activities of life. When we looked at the requirements through an equity lens and with the communities we serve, we quickly learned that a primary barrier to getting an ID or driver's license was our client's ability to prove they lived in Washington. This can be accomplished in many ways, by a lease or utility bill for example. We learned customers who were homeless or unstably housed—disproportionately from BIPOC communities—struggled to meet this requirement. When we looked further into the history and assumptions behind this requirement, we concluded that this requirement must be removed. There is no statutory mandate requiring proof of residency and this requirement was designed to exclude. The agency quickly removed the residency requirement, which was a fundamental change in how we issue IDs and driver's licenses and removed a huge barrier for some of our most underserved customers.

What I learned from this example is that in order to dismantle racism in our service delivery, it is vital to understand how customers or clients move through our services. Where are they getting stuck? How and why are they being turned away? Are they given a message that they are not welcome, or not seen or heard? At DOL, I developed customer experience capabilities in order to understand sticking points for those who faced the highest barriers and put those lessons into action.

Internal Operations: Under my leadership, DOL developed a governance structure for agency decisions, projects, and investments that focused decision-making on understanding how our decisions helped or harmed our customers, as well as who was being over-served and under-served. I created the agency's first outreach program, the Strategic Realization Office, and an Equity and Inclusion Office. These programs worked across our DOL system and focused on eliminating barriers for our customers and inclusively redesigning DOL systems to be easy and intuitive for all. Building these equitable decision-making tools in the institution and complimentary systems to implement equitable change quickly helped us make real, measurable anti-racist progress.

In the workplace: My prior experiences have taught me that to make anti-racist progress in the workplace, I need to be a visible, vocal sponsor of anti-racist behavior and thinking. I model a learning mindset, vulnerability, and humility. I will continue to learn in support of my own growth and will coach

and guide our leaders to be bold and resolute in our pursuit of building an anti-racist culture and zealously guard against falling back on racist norms. Similarly, I will ask for and accept coaching and mentorship to make sure I am always pushing for real progress.

Creating and sustaining anti-racist progress in the workplace takes the collective efforts of each and every member of the team. In my prior experiences, I ensured leaders and employees were trained on anti-racist competencies, given clear expectations, provided opportunities for growth, and ultimately held responsible for creating an anti-racist culture.

To support our progress, I ensured that personnel policies and practices support anti-racist progress, engaged staff in learning about their employee experience, and invited employees in to co-create solutions. The court has an active RSJI Change Team, and I am excited to support them as they serve as change agents, while also making it clear that it is every employee's responsibility to behave in an anti-racist manner.

Making anti-racism progress at SMC will be a welcomed challenge. I am eager to build on the work that the court has done and has in progress. I am confident that my experience will help propel our progress forward for the benefit of our employees, court users, stakeholders, and the public.

7. **You mentioned in your letter that you value speaking truth to power and hearing others speak truth to your power. Can you talk about how you've been able to do that in the past? How will you do that here?**

Speaking truth to power is one of my core values. It is why I sought a career in the law. As an attorney and executive leader, I amplified the voices of those who have been marginalized, excluded, or over-included in our legal system. I boldly challenged leaders who chose to maintain the status quo or worse, who were poised to make a choice that harmed or excluded others.

As I mentioned above, I first came to DOL after news broke that the agency had been sharing information with Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE). I came in at this very difficult time with the purpose of turning the agency around.

As a top executive leader for DOL, I heard directly from people who had been harmed by the agency's actions. It was hard to hear and see the harmful impact these actions had on our community. In some cases, the consequences to those we served was devastating. I am grateful for the opportunity to have served in that role and to hear directly from community speaking truth to my power, as it was an important part of the healing process between the agency and the community. I learned a lot about myself in that experience. I have more capacity for empathy than I knew was possible. I stepped into the blind spots created by my own privilege. I had the ability and courage to say the hard things that needed to be said. I accepted responsibility on behalf of the agency for the harm that occurred. I was and am committed to hearing and creating forums to hear how I am, or am not, using my power as an agency leader to push hard enough or fast enough for change.

I had to learn to be humble and vulnerable in those conversations. And what I learned was that I, with the privilege I hold, was not there to save-the-day and be the fixer; I was not in a position to know how to repair the harm caused. Rather, I was there to hear the voices and concerns of the community and

implement the solutions identified and created with community. The end result was partnership, respect, and trust.

In creating change within DOL and with our partners, my ability to stand strong and boldly advocate for change was tested. The work of reckoning with the racist roots of many of our policies and practices required difficult conversations between community leaders, law enforcement, and political leaders. Some of my toughest conversations were with DOL leaders, from front line supervisors through executives. Not all leaders were prepared to embrace change, and I had to take risks in speaking truth to power to ensure that DOL's culture shifted to a collaborative, welcoming, inclusive organization.

I was responsible for overseeing the work of 1350 people in 56 locations. Each and every employee was impacted by the changes that came about as a result of our efforts to become a trusted community partner. The system and culture in place at DOL was longstanding and strong, and built on an identity created around public safety and distrust of those we serve. The idea of partnering with our customers was a new concept and recognizing how our own behaviors and attitudes caused harm was very difficult. But this ultimately opened the door for the agency to critically examine its practices and change them for the better. I will continue to lean into difficult conversations with a high-level of tact, diplomacy, discretion, and honesty. I will invite and encourage others to be open and honest with me.

8. What does accountability look like to you – to whom are you accountable?
As a public servant, I am first accountable to the people of Seattle, and particularly to the disproportionately BIPOC and low-income communities who come through our doors. I am accountable to our Presiding Judge to execute his vision of a court that treats people well and leaves them better than when they came to us. I am accountable to the court's 250 employees, and all of the broader community that relies on Seattle Municipal Court.

For me, accountability looks like being transparent and responsible to these stakeholders for ensuring that SMC can show tangible results in boldly advancing racial and social justice, creating a culture of service excellence, and building systems that are intuitive and accessible to all. Being accountable also means creating transparency into our operations and programs, as well as getting clear feedback from community how they will be measuring our success.

9. How do you use your power to uplift others?
I uplift others by putting the people I serve, court users, Seattleites, employees, and stakeholders at the center of all my decision-making. My goal is to create and sustain environments where people feel they belong, and are included, encouraged, safe, and valued.

In the workplace, it is my primary responsibility to create an environment where everyone can thrive. I use my power to lift up others by modeling respect, empathy, kindness, and trusting people to bring their creative and strategic thinking to our work. I bring employees into the process of creating a shared, compelling vision for the organization and create an open and collaborative environment where everyone knows how they can contribute to our success in achieving that vision.

In serving the public, I use my power to lift others by creating easy, intuitive, accessible, and equitable access to service, and co-design effective and meaningful processes and programs with and for those we serve. I believe in the inherent value and worth of all people and hold myself responsible for creating

workplaces and public spaces that are affirming, supportive, and empowering. When people, employees, the public and stakeholders, feel empowered to co-design services and processes that work for everyone, the results are remarkable and far exceed what any one person can imagine.

My experience leading DOL's operations during the pandemic is an excellent example of lifting others. DOL was able to shift its operating model in a matter of weeks from a longstanding in-person service delivery model to primarily serving customers online, by phone, or mail. We shifted quickly and worked hard to leave no customer behind. We worked across our system to get great results - we worked with community, stakeholders, the Governor's office, the legislature, and in every part of the agency to make significant changes so that we can continue to keep our transportation system moving and our customers served. I am most proud of the way we leveraged this time to make significant progress towards realizing our vision of eliminating our customer's barriers to getting what they need.

We were successful because we were creative and stretched ourselves to think bigger and deeper. We relied on the systems we created to drive innovation and change. We relied on the collective wisdom and talent of employees to help us find a way forward. We relied on our partnerships with community to design equitable solutions. During an extraordinary and unprecedented time, our culture was strong and lifted us all.

During my first weeks at the court, I shared a quote that has inspired me and pushed me to use my power and privilege to uplift others. Sonya Renee Taylor is a poet, author, and activist. She wrote:

> We will not go back to normal. Normal never was. Our pre-corona existence was not normal other than we normalized greed, inequity, exhaustion, depletion, extraction, disconnection, confusion, rage, hoarding, hate and lack. We should not long to return, my friends. We are being given the opportunity to stitch a new garment. One that fits all of humanity and nature.

If we lift others up and invite each other in, we can co-create and imagine a court and courthouse that serves everyone. I am excited to build on the great work the court has undertaken to be the court of the community. I am eager to stitch a new garment here together with court staff, the people of Seattle, and our stakeholders at City Council and elsewhere.