



September 9, 2026

The Honorable Mike Johnston
Mayor of the City and County of Denver

Re: Preserving Denver's Commitment to Independent Civilian Oversight

Dear Mayor Johnston,

Denver has reached an important crossroads in public safety. We, the undersigned, are deeply concerned that transparent accountability through civilian oversight for law enforcement is threatened. Recent public safety initiatives, including the Denver Police Department's Education-Based Development (EBD) policy and Executive Director Directive 2026-001 governing the Denver Sheriff Department, threaten the system created and supported by the greater community.

Although different in design, the Denver Police Department's EBD policy and Executive Director Directive 2026-001 move in the same direction: both create alternative processes for addressing misconduct that reduce independent oversight while concentrating greater discretion within the agencies being overseen.

We acknowledge Executive Director of Safety Al Gardner's commitment to pause Directive 2026-001 following sustained concerns from the Office of the Independent Monitor (OIM), Citizen Oversight Board (COB), community organizations, and Denver residents. A pause, however, is meaningful only if it is used for genuine examination and community dialogue—not simply to delay implementation of a predetermined outcome.

Denver's oversight system was built over decades through community advocacy, public leadership, and the votes of Denver residents. Stakeholders united to create the Use of Force Policy, the Discipline Matrix, the OIM, and the COB. Time and again, voters have chosen to strengthen—not weaken—the OIM and COB. This history represents a clear public mandate for transparency and accountability and should guide how Denver addresses any proposed changes to law enforcement accountability, no matter the issues that a change is said to address.

Yet, we have not received a clear explanation of the problems recent changes are intended to solve, why existing accountability processes are inadequate, or what evidence demonstrates that the proposed changes will improve accountability or public trust. Before redesigning an accountability system, the public deserves to understand the problem being addressed and the evidence supporting the proposed solution.



We have also learned that approximately half of the Denver Sheriff Department is currently under investigation. While this signals a serious organizational challenge, reducing independent oversight does not address the underlying problem and may compound it. Denver must examine not only investigations and employee morale, but also leadership, supervision, organizational culture, training, and accountability.

Taken together, these developments raise a fundamental question: Will Denver continue to honor the system of independent civilian oversight its residents have repeatedly demanded, or will that system gradually be diminished through administrative policy changes?

We respectfully ask your administration to:

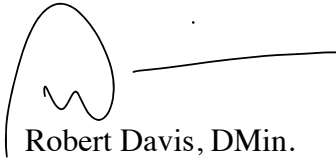
1. Use the pause of Executive Director Directive 2026-001 to conduct a comprehensive and transparent examination to identify the challenges facing the Denver Sheriff Department, and pause DPD's proposed EBD policy while this broader review occurs. No permanent changes should proceed until the problems they aim to solve, the evidence supporting proposed solutions, and the effects on independent oversight have been publicly examined.
2. Convene a publicly transparent community-based problem-solving process modeled after the process used to create the Use of Force Policy, Discipline Matrix, and OIM, with the purpose of collaboratively addressing and developing solutions to the issues identified in the above-mentioned review. Participants should include the OIM, COB, public safety agencies, City Council members, subject matter experts, labor representatives, civil rights advocates, residents, and a diverse cross-section of community organizations—including organizations that have publicly challenged these proposals.
3. Establish a formal policy requiring that substantive changes affecting officer or deputy discipline, misconduct investigations, use of force, or civilian oversight receive meaningful OIM review, be presented to the COB, and undergo a transparent community process before implementation.
4. Publicly reaffirm your administration's commitment to preserving the independence and authority of Denver's civilian oversight system and ensuring that future reforms strengthen—not diminish—the roles of the OIM and COB.

Mayor Johnston, this is not a call to preserve the status quo. If a significant portion of a public safety department is under investigation, Denver should ask difficult questions about why. If the disciplinary system has problems, those problems should be examined. But those challenges should lead to deeper examination and collaborative problem-solving—not less transparency and less independent oversight.



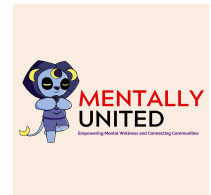
The future of Denver's independent civilian oversight system should not be decided through a series of internal administrative actions. It should be shaped openly, transparently, and in partnership with the people of Denver who helped create it. Denver has successfully navigated difficult questions of police accountability before by bringing community, oversight institutions, law enforcement, and City leaders together. We ask your administration to do so again.

Respectfully,



Robert Davis, DMin.

Denver Task Force to Reimagine Policing and Public Safety



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