

Communication from Public

Name: Christopher Taylor
Date Submitted: 10/21/2024 10:55 PM
Council File No: 00-9999

Comments for Public Posting: This is being written for general, non-agendized public comment. I am a public librarian and I am asking for the City Council to turn their attention to the matter of safety in our libraries. Libraries serve as one of very few institutions that are open to any and all - this is a critical part of our mission and one that librarians perform with great pride and dedication. However, my colleagues and I have been regular witnesses to - and victims of - verbal abuse, sexual harassment, intimidation and violence in the course of our regular work day. Verbal threats of physical attacks and murder are parsed out by staff, leaving the recipient to wonder about their credibility. This is a taxing, demoralizing task, one that is faced by some library staff on a daily basis, creating a fearful environment which distracts both staff and library patrons from the public library's mandate of providing information, education and access to technology. It has become difficult to do our work. I ask not only asking for City Council to listen to library workers, but to additionally seek methods to support the public who are experiencing unstable housing, substance abuse struggles, mental health challenges, poverty and other barriers to the people living safe, secure and healthy lives. The remedies to this current situation are complex, but a single truth remains: public libraries are one of the only places for people to go, public libraries are currently unequipped to respond to the profound needs of the public that comes through our door, and library staff are feeling this deeply. Thank you.