

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Monday, July 27, 2020

CONTACT:
Lisa Calderón
Chief of Staff, City Council District 9
(720) 933-7764

COUNCILWOMAN CDEBACA RESPONDS TO THE MAYOR'S STATE OF CITY ADDRESS

Statement from Councilwoman Candi CdeBaca, responding to Mayor Hancock's 2020 [State of the City](#) address:

"Today the mayor issued his State of the City address, in which he discussed economic inequities, racism, policing, homelessness, and youth violence. Unfortunately, he left out substantive solutions to address these problems — many of which disproportionately impact my constituents in District 9.

"We are faced with an unprecedented triple threat: the pandemic, the economic crisis, and the crisis of systemic racism — all of which are exacerbated by the historic structural inequities that continue to be perpetuated under this administration. We must stop balancing the budget on the backs of low-wage workers who can least afford it. The mayor's proposed across-the-board 11.5% budget cuts, furloughs, and potential layoffs are not equitable. He has made no commitment to trim the fat from top-paid city officials nor his 50+ appointees, most of who make over \$100,000 a year, while taking nearly 12% from the salaries of lower-wage workers. This is one of the reasons I worked on getting a ballot proposal to the voters for this November to give City Council greater confirmation authority on the mayor's key appointees, only 13 of which are actually necessary in our City Charter.

"We have also not seen any tangible goals, metrics, or transparency from the newly created Long Term Recovery Committee (LTRC) that was established to oversee and plan Denver's recovery strategy — specifically: how is this task force, comprised of political insiders and developers, focusing on the economic recovery of communities of color that were disproportionately impacted by the pandemic and economic crisis? The citizens of Denver are not even privvy to how EXACTLY our federal COVID19 relief dollars are being divided up among businesses and organizations. There is no possibility of "equity" without transparency around who we are helping and by how much. We know who always gets the crumbs, if anything at all.

"The economic inequity among city workers is one more indication that we are not all in this equally together. I will continue to advocate for a fair and equitable budgeting process to protect from the most severe funding cuts for services for our elders, youth, and struggling small

business owners in marginalized communities, while eliminating vanity initiatives that have no immediate guaranteed return on investment or have outlasted their usefulness.

“With Denver as the second most gentrified city in the nation, Mayor Hancock, in his third term, has yet to lay out a comprehensive anti-displacement policy, and instead has chosen to continue the influence of public-private partnerships for vanity projects, including the \$100 million 16th St. Mall renovation; the \$528 million National Western Center complex, primarily an entertainment playground that includes no affordable housing units in its plans; or colluding with private developers to extinguish a conservation easement on the Park Hill golf course with no enforceable commitment for affordable housing.

“‘Public-private partnerships’ are also not the answer to resolving police violence and the disproportionate killing of BIPOC by law enforcement officers. The mayor’s proposed racial justice initiative, the Denver Institute of Equity and Reconciliation (DIE-R), has left out activists from the most impacted communities and was created without transparency. It is just one more attempt at the incremental reform of a fundamentally broken and inherently violent system that instead needs transformation through funding reallocation. We don’t need anymore recycled ideas, reform initiatives, trainings, or ‘dialogues.’ We needed a mayor a decade ago who understood the plight of those who are systemically oppressed and who could have dismantled those systems, rather than protecting them at our expense.

“We need fresh, bold ideas that come directly from the people. It is tone-deaf for the mayor to tell his constituents that the police are doing a great job and at the same time say that police brutality is merely a symptom of racism. More than a symptom, police are the enforcers of a law-and-order system that has been designed to uphold and perpetuate racism. This is why I am exploring all budgeting options to reallocate resources from the public safety budget into community-based initiatives — and why I led the effort to divest private prison contracts for managing Denver’s halfway houses — and to create opportunities for community-based reentry providers. It is also why I am working on additional charter change proposals to make the Independent Monitor truly independent to freely investigate police complaints without political interference — and to make the City Attorney a depoliticized position vetted by a nominating commission appointed by Councilmembers.

“The mayor’s remarks regarding homelessness are similarly tone-deaf. In a year when the Point In Time survey — which was conducted pre-COVID — recorded the highest number of unhoused residents in the city in years, it’s not enough to repeat the slogan ‘we can do better’ and point to the Safe Outdoor Space (SOS) proposal, an initiative the mayor resisted for months, as solutions to the current homelessness crisis. SOS is a harm reduction measure that needs to be implemented citywide and at a scale to meet the need in our city — I will not allow District 9 neighborhoods of color to continue to be a dumping ground for failed administration policies. But HOUSING, with wraparound supports, and KEEPING PEOPLE HOUSED are the real solutions to homelessness crisis. We need resources directed to getting our unhoused neighbors into stable housing, not homeless shelters, and we need another moratorium on the

filing and enforcement of evictions in order to keep residents housed. We need bold taxing mechanisms that SHIFT the burden of our crisis to the corporate entities that have manufactured our housing crisis, not another sales tax levied on those who most need the help.

“Regarding the mayor’s comments on youth violence: Having managed a community-based youth serving program for many years before I ran for elected office, I understand that if young people do not see their future, including a prosperous future in Denver where they have housing, educational opportunities, food security, and clean air to breathe, we will continue to lose them to not just to gun violence, but to the violence that comes with poverty and unequal access to opportunity.

“For all of these reasons, the mayor’s State of the City speech mirrors his policies that have left so many behind in the second most gentrifying city in the nation — and without any real solutions to alleviate the most challenging economic, racial, and social conditions of our lifetime. Let’s all continue to push the mayor to ‘do better’ during his last three years of office while we continue to build community-based solutions to create a more equitable city.”

###