From: Kate Wheeler
To: Public Comments
Subject: Message From a Local Community Farmer
Date: Monday, July 20, 2020 5:00:05 PM

Hello!

My name is Kate Wheeler and I have lived in Asheville for over ten years. I am a farmer, farmers market manager, and community member here who has seen first hand the violence of not only the recent events involving police brutality against protesters and targeting Black and Brown folks but also the devastation that COVID has brought to our city and county as a whole. I am terrified for loved ones, acquaintances and everyone as we continue to open up our county as numbers continue to grow - and as those cases are continually disproportionately impacting our Black and Brown communities despite them making up only a small percentage of our population.

Please do not continue to center tourism over people's lives. We are entering a time where how we act as a community will be looked back on as historic - and we can be either leaders in this time, or we can be those who are ashamed and regretful. How could we have let this happen - when all we needed to do was keep things closed for longer, keep our tourists out for a few more months? This is what we will be saying to ourselves in years and decades to come.

Please also recognize how this is all linked. Those who are being attacked by police, ICE agents, and the state are also those falling ill, left without resources, proper housing, schooling, care. Treated as less than human. Please defund the County Sheriff's Office and Detention Center by 50% and redistribute those funds back into the community! Police are not meant to hold all of the complexities of care that we need in our community, and we have been shown time and time again that the institution itself is racist - despite the "good apples" - often ridiculed, demoted, and cast aside when attempting to stand on the right side of justice. Please act with your heart, cast politics aside and consider this what it is - a human rights issue, a human rights violation, and with a clear path towards meaningful change and community care!

-Kate Wheeler
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Kate Wheeler
She/Her/Her's