

11-5-18 GOW
Public Comment

November 5, 2018

To: The Honorable Joe McDermott, King County Council Chair
The Honorable Rod Dembowski, Council Committee of the Whole Chair
The Honorable Jeanne Kohl-Welles, Council Committee of the Whole Vice Chair
The Honorable Claudia Balducci, King County Councilmember
The Honorable Reagan Dunn, King County Councilmember
The Honorable Larry Gossett, King County Councilmember
The Honorable Kathy Lambert, King County Councilmember
The Honorable Dave Upthegrove, King County Councilmember
The Honorable Pete von Reichbauer, King County Councilmember

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CLERK
KING COUNTY COUNCIL

Cc: Jeff Muhm, Council Initiatives Director, King County Council
Ken Thompson, Ken Thompson Consulting

Re: *Prioritizing Young People Who Experience Foster Care, Homelessness, and/or the Juvenile Justice System in King County PSTAA Funding Considerations*

Dear King County Councilmembers,

The Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA) is a considerable opportunity to support proven and innovate new strategies to improve education outcomes for vulnerable children and youth in King County. The state's enabling statute rightly signals the importance of targeting resources from PSTAA towards improving education outcomes for youth who are experiencing homelessness, in the foster care system, or are otherwise vulnerable. We applaud the County for embracing this principle in King County Motion 15029 and adding young people who are involved in the juvenile justice system.

We are a group of nonprofit service providers and advocacy agencies that work alongside young people who interact with these systems. For the remainder of the letter, we refer to these youth to as the "named populations."

We believe the PSTAA funding process must (1) ensure that whatever funds are disbursed will positively impact the education outcomes for the named populations; (2) involve a meaningful racial equity and social justice analysis regarding how PSTAA funds will be used; and (3) be informed by the voices and experiences of children and youth and their families.

Please note that our group did not submit a collective response or proposal to the County's July Request for Information, though some members of our group may individually request funds for programs or services as the PSTAA process moves forward.

Prioritizing the Named Populations

The young people we work with experience trauma and loss, emotional upheaval, transitions and instability in their lives, which directly impact education outcomes/attainment.

- ➔ With every placement change or move, foster and homeless students lose between 3-6 months of educational progress, resulting in these young people performing worse than their peers on every academic measure. When foster youth and homeless youth fail to graduate high school,

they are significantly more likely to live in poverty, require public assistance, experience homelessness, and become incarcerated.

- ➔ Of the 9,000 Washington children in foster care, fewer than 50% graduate high school on time and fewer than 3% earn a four-year college degree by their mid-20s.
- ➔ Of the over 40,000 homeless students in our state fewer than 54% graduate high school on time.
- ➔ For young people with juvenile court dispositions the 4-year graduation rate is around 23%, with graduation results “worse for youth with more serious sanctions—13% of youth on probation and 16% of youth committed to Juvenile Rehabilitation had graduated.”¹

As the Council shapes PSTAA funding priorities and evaluates funding requests in 2019, we encourage you to revisit Motion 15029. To ensure its principles are embedded in your decision-making process and to center the experiences of the named populations, consider applying the following questions when evaluating all PSTAA funding requests:

1. *Does the requested service/program reflect a focus on young people who experience foster care, homelessness, and/or the juvenile justice system in King County?*
2. *How does the request propose to improve the education outcomes for the named populations?*
3. *Is the request’s assertion that it will improve education outcomes for these young people supported by data?*
4. *Does the proposal positively impact racial equity for our most vulnerable young people?*
5. *Is the requested service/program endorsed by young people and their families as a critical solution to improve their education outcomes?*
6. *If funded, will the service/program be implemented in a geographically diverse manner across King County?*

The *PSTAA Strategy Assessment Report* prepared for the Council applies some of this analysis to some strategies. We encourage the Council to embed our suggested analysis for all proposed strategies moving forward to ensure that programs and services are funded that most impact the education outcomes for the most vulnerable youth in our County.

Furthermore, by making the named populations a central focus, we believe you will also center the experiences of youth of color given that youth of color are disproportionately impacted by homelessness, foster care, and the juvenile justice system. In fact, recent data from Schoolhouse Washington indicates that *of the 9,500 students who experience homelessness in King County, 82% are youth of color.*²

Racial Equity

As the *Strategy Assessment Report* notes, the analysis carried out was done “prior to any systematic review through a race and/or social justice framework” (pg. 94). We concur with the report’s reflections that this assessment is critical to ensure the PSTAA funding disbursement process is grounded in racial and social justice equity.

¹ <https://erdc.wa.gov/publications/justice-program-outcomes/students-and-after-juvenile-court-dispositions>.

² <https://schoolhousewa.org/data/dashboards/local-data-and-outcomes/>.

We encourage the County to rely on its existing tools (e.g., through the Youth Action Plan) to meaningfully engage community members to determine how PSTAA funds can help root out education inequities that impact youth of color.

Youth and Family Voice

We also believe that as the County evaluates funding requests, it should meaningfully engage young people and families who have experienced these systems to better understand what *young people and families believe would make the biggest impact on their education outcomes*. We are happy to engage further with you as to how best to partner with young people and families in your decision-making process.

We want to thank the Council for the commitments it made in the Motion, and we look forward to the months ahead during which the community can engage with the Council on how PSTAA funds can improve the education outcomes for our County's most vulnerable young people.

If you have questions about our group's recommendations about the PSTAA funding process, please contact Erin Shea McCann (erin@esmccann.com) or Remy Trupin (rtrupin@luma-consulting.com), who we have engaged to represent our group on this issue.

Respectfully,

Annie Blackledge
Executive Director
The Mockingbird Society

Laurie Lippold
Director of Public Policy
Partners for Our Children

Justice Bobbe J. Bridge (ret.)
Founding President/CEO
Center for Children & Youth Justice

Erin Lovell
Executive Director
Legal Counsel for Youth & Children

Melinda Giovengo, PhD
Chief Executive Officer & President
YouthCare

Arthur Padilla
Interim Executive Director
ROOTS Young Adult Shelter

Juliette Schindler Kelly
Director of Government Relations & Advocacy
College Success Foundation

Terry Pottmeyer
President & CEO
Friends of Youth

Anne Lee & Karen Pillar
Executive Director & Managing Attorney
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