



King County | Office of the Executive

Executive Girmay Zahilay

Chinook Building, CNK-EX-0800
401 Fifth Avenue, Suite 800
Seattle, WA 98104-2391

July 1, 2026

The Honorable Sarah Perry
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Perry:

This letter transmits the King County Behavioral Health Bridge Implementation Plan 2028-2034, which responds to Ordinance 20023, Section 70, Proviso P1, and a proposed Ordinance that would, if enacted, adopt the implementation plan. Adoption of this proposed legislation would reaffirm the County's commitment to high-quality, accessible, effective, and equitable behavioral health care in King County.

The "King County Behavioral Health Bridge" ("the Bridge") represents a new name for this plan and its programs, reflected in a separate proposed Ordinance, to replace the "Mental Illness and Drug Dependency" (MIDD) name that has been used for this fund and its programs and advisory committee since 2007. Responsive to community feedback, the King County Behavioral Health Bridge name emphasizes the role of sales tax-funded programs in creating a bridge between people experiencing behavioral health conditions and community behavioral health treatment, other systems people interact with including the criminal-legal system, and pathways to recovery.

Under its former name MIDD, this fund supported programs that served over 130,000 unduplicated King County residents between 2017 and 2025. These investments make programs possible that improve health and wellness, recovery, and connection to community, especially for people most affected by inequities related to race, income, housing status, and access to health care.

The King County Behavioral Health Bridge is projected to generate nearly \$800 million for behavioral health care in King County between 2028 and 2034. The proposed King County Behavioral Health Bridge Implementation Plan 2028-2034 invests strategically to break the cycle

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and prevent incarceration, hospitalization, homelessness, and crisis for low-income people with mental health and substance use conditions. The plan builds on past successes while strategically tackling the most pressing behavioral health issues in King County communities through investments in five interconnected strategy areas:

- Care transitions and diversion services.
- Substance use disorder prevention, treatment, and recovery.
- Equitable access to behavioral health care.
- Child, youth, and young adult mental wellbeing.
- Behavioral health workforce development.

The proposed plan invests where the need is greatest and where dollars can make the most meaningful impact. It describes the forecasted expenditure of revenues in the five strategy areas to achieve the King County Behavioral Health Bridge's identified goals. It includes activities in which the County anticipates investing to reduce behavioral health system fragmentation, improve service availability, and align with other funding sources such as Medicaid and local funds. The plan also describes a performance measurement and evaluation framework to assess and report on how well Bridge investments are achieving desired results, and describes plans for regular reporting to the Council and community.

This plan and its five strategy areas are the product of an intensive engagement process that began in June 2024 and concluded in March 2026. The strategy areas, goals, and activities were informed by community engagement with over 2,200 King County residents, an extensive multi-sector process involving over 100 subject matter experts, and the most current available county-level data on needs and outcomes. Community engagement activities included participation from behavioral health agencies, people with lived experience of behavioral health, incarcerated people with behavioral health conditions, scholars, advocates, representatives of the legal system, the MIDD Advisory Committee, elected officials, and other community partners. Feedback from these diverse individuals significantly informed the investments described in this plan, and will inform future procurement and operational phases of the Behavioral Health Bridge.

The King County Behavioral Health Bridge Implementation Plan 2028-2034 and its programs will enable the County to continue to break cycles of incarceration, hospitalization, and homelessness and build toward a future of available, accessible, effective, and equitable behavioral health care. I look forward to working with the Council to provide access to high-quality behavioral health care that enables residents to pursue long term recovery, stability, and wellbeing. Thank you for your consideration of this important Plan and proposed Ordinance.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Dr. Susan McLaughlin, director of the Department of Community and Human Services, at 206-477-9309.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Girmay Zahilay', written in a cursive style.

for

Girmay Zahilay

King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Stephanie Cirkovich, Chief of Staff

Melani Hay, Clerk of the Council

Karan Gill, Deputy Executive, Office of the Executive

Jasmin Weaver, Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Hyeok Kim, Chief Operating Officer, Office of the Executive

Sierra Howlett Browne, Director of Government Relations, Office of the Executive

Garrett Holbrook, Council Relations Manager, Office of the Executive

Dr. Susan McLaughlin, Acting Director, Department of Community and Human Services