



King County

Dow Constantine

King County Executive

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October 7, 2020

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

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

Pursuant to Metropolitan King County Council Motion 15521, please find enclosed the Children and Families Strategy Task Force's report, "Equitable and Accessible Child Care in King County: Recommendations from the Children and Families Strategy Task Force." These recommendations provide guidance to work toward an equitable, affordable, and accessible child care sector for all King County children, families, and child care providers.

King County's Children and Families Strategy Task Force was created in response to growing concern over the lack of affordable and accessible child care for King County families, as outlined in a 2018 report by the King County Women's Advisory Board. As required by Motion 15521, the enclosed report outlines strategies for King County to employ in partnership with other policymakers and funders to increase access and affordability of child care. The recommendations are grounded in a deep commitment to racial justice, and provide additional focus on supporting the child care workforce, engaging regional employers, and addressing disparities and barriers experienced by families as they seek child care.

For a long-term and sustainable solution that ensures equitable access and affordability for all families, it will be critical to secure partnership and financial investment from Federal, State, and private partners. While King County cannot build and maintain a healthy and equitable child care sector alone, we have an opportunity to provide clear leadership and to galvanize the existing array of fragmented efforts. Such a response can no longer be delayed without exacerbating the disparities that currently plague the region. By demonstrating bold leadership, we can mobilize Federal, State, and local partners as well as private funders in working collaboratively toward a healthy, equitable, and thriving child care system for all.

While the report's recommendations offer strategies to work toward an affordable and accessible child care system, I would like to highlight the following recommendations as feasible, high priority, and well-aligned with King County's existing work and values:

- *King County Child Care Subsidy Program*: Reinstate a regional program to address unmet need, focusing supports on lower-income families in King County who are not eligible for or adequately served by other subsidy programs.
- *Financial Incentives to Address Access*: Offer financial incentives, including stipends or subsidy enhancements, property tax reductions or rental supports, or publicly-purchased child care slots to child care providers to address specific barriers to access.
- *Child Care and Early Childhood Professional Development System*: In partnership with State agencies and other funders, support the expansion of child care professional development systems to ensure greater coordination and equitable access for and about people of color and children and families with disabilities.
- *Supports for Informal Caregivers*: Partner with trusted community organizations to provide outreach and supports to Family, Friend, and Neighbor (FFN) and informal caregivers.
- *Healing-Centered Practices to Address Trauma*: Invest in holistic supports for children and families to connect them to needed resources, including those that support healing from trauma and promotion of infant, early childhood, and family mental health.

The recommendations of the Children and Families Strategy Task Force furthers the King County Strategic Plan health and human services goal of improving the health and well-being of all people in our community. The work also aligns with the King County Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan by addressing disparities and prioritizing solutions for families furthest from child care access.

It is estimated that this report required approximately 240 hours by DCHS staff to produce, costing approximately \$16,500 in staff hours and \$4,500 in consultant costs.

Thank you for your consideration of the report and its recommendations, and for your support of the important work of the Children and Families Strategy Task Force. I look forward to continuing to work with the Council to assure that all King County children and families have equitable access to child care, and that the essential workforce providing these services is valued and supported.

If your staff have any questions, please contact Leo Flor, Director, Department of Community and Human Services, at 206-477-4384.

Sincerely,



Dow Constantine
King County Executive

Enclosure

cc: King County Councilmembers

The Honorable Claudia Balducci

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ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

Shannon Braddock, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Dwight Dively, Director, Office of Performance, Strategy, and Budget

Karan Gill, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive

Leo Flor, Director, Department of Community and Human Services