



# King County 2021 Legislative Priorities

## Be Bold: A generational challenge requires a generational response

To address the inequities and failings in our social and economic structures, highlighted and amplified throughout 2020, we encourage you to act boldly, to act decisively, and to act compassionately. Strong legislative leadership is essential to address systemic inequities, and to preserve and restore health, safety, economic opportunity, and quality of life for all Washingtonians.

### Pandemic response

With the COVID-19 pandemic continuing to infect thousands of the state's residents, the legislature must focus on keeping Washingtonians safe and healthy. Combating a generational challenge is going to require a generational response. Prioritize budget and policy decisions that provide resources for COVID-19 response, foundational public health services, childcare (particularly for our essential workers), emergency and supportive housing, behavioral health, and other safety net programs that are seeing extreme demand while suffering extreme resource shortages.

Provide culturally responsive COVID-19 testing, treatment, and access to safety net programs for our Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) communities as a step towards eliminating racial and ethnic health disparities. Provide local governments with maximum fiscal flexibility within their limited revenue streams to address local priorities; and eliminate legal barriers to governing efficiently in a world where large in-person gatherings are a danger to public health.



### Rebuild our economy

The economic devastation resulting from the pandemic has been widespread but unevenly distributed. As we lay the groundwork for rebuilding the economy, we encourage the legislature to be mindful of the acute and specific economic impact borne by women and BIPOC populations in the workforce, and adopt policies that address both the specific impacts and underlying conditions, in order to provide an economic recovery that truly lifts all residents. Leverage borrowing rates to create jobs through large-scale investments in infrastructure across a broad range of sectors—affordable housing, broadband, transit, green energy, and other public infrastructure. Invest in workforce development programs to help our residents learn new skills as a path to economic recovery. Ensure quality and affordable childcare is available for all Washingtonians who need it.



### Dismantle systemic racism

Commit to becoming an anti-racist state government by beginning an iterative, multi-year effort to shift resources and reliance from systems that cause harm to upstream programs aligned with racial and social justice. As any state revenue reduction is considered, an equity analysis should be applied to budget decisions to protect the state's BIPOC communities from bearing an outsized share of any potential negative impacts. Build a more fair and just legal system through law enforcement reforms and targeted investments in BIPOC communities that have been disproportionately impacted by our existing criminal legal system.



### Protect our environment

The 2020 wildfire season was like no other. We saw entire communities throughout the west coast burn to the ground. Two years ago, the plight of Puget Sound's resident orcas and the salmon they rely on captivated our region's hearts and minds. We implore you to heed this warning call and take meaningful action to combat climate change and transform our State's approach to protecting clean water and healthy habitat. We must protect the places Washingtonians cherish and preserve the places we are at risk of losing.

### Fix our tax structure

Washingtonians need a fair, simple, and stable tax system capable of delivering basic services to all communities of the state. That system does not currently exist here. The services our residents and businesses have relied on to survive this pandemic are funded by a tax system that is designed to falter exactly when the services are needed most. King County has only been able to continue providing critical assistance because of federal stimulus dollars, which are subject to a variety of uncertain national political forces. Local governments need real and reliable local options to fund services— simply hoping for stimulus from higher up the political chain endangers our residents' health and safety.

