



Legislation Text

File #: 2020-0200, **Version:** 2

A MOTION requesting the executive to prepare an assessment report to inform council deliberations regarding possible renewal of the best starts for kids levy.

WHEREAS, in November 2015, King County voters passed the first best starts for kids levy to generate funding for a wide range of programs to support promotion, prevention and early intervention for King County's children, youth and families, and

WHEREAS, the goals of the existing best starts for kids levy are to ensure that: babies are born healthy; King County is a place where everyone has equitable opportunities for health and safety as they progress through childhood; and communities offer safe, welcoming and healthy environments that help improve outcomes for all of King County's children and families, regardless of where they live, and

WHEREAS, the best starts for kids levy was created to align with King County's equity and social justice principles and includes a focus on systems and policies change so that all communities in King County can thrive and prosper regardless of race or place, and

WHEREAS, fifty percent of the existing levy's proceeds are allocated to promotion, prevention and early intervention programs for children under age five and pregnant families, thirty-five percent are allocated to promotion, prevention and early intervention programs for children and youth ages five through twenty-four years old; ten percent are allocated to creating safe and healthy communities of opportunity; and five percent are allocated to evaluation of the best starts for kids initiative. The allocation has been beneficial in delivering services to populations in need of the services, and

WHEREAS, the best starts for kids levy will expire December 31, 2021, and

WHEREAS, the best starts for kids levy is a voter-approved, six-year levy lid lift, renewal of which

requires voter approval of a ballot measure, and

WHEREAS, the best starts for kids levy distributes resources across the region, targeting investments to those most in need, and

WHEREAS, current events have underscored the urgency of the continued need to dismantle systems of racial and other forms of oppression which affect youth, families and communities in King County, like the school to prison pipeline, and

WHEREAS, over twenty-five thousand new babies are born in King County in each year, and

WHEREAS, while King County as a region is thriving, research shows that there are significant disparities in birth outcomes by race, geography and income, and some children and youth are in danger of being left behind, and

WHEREAS, infant mortality is four times higher in some areas of King County than others, twenty-nine percent of elementary age children are flourishing and resilient, thirty-three percent of adolescents report depressive feelings and twenty-four percent report using alcohol or other illicit drugs, and

WHEREAS, those disparities persist throughout a child's life course, contributing to sustained disparities in long-term success, and

WHEREAS, services supported by proceeds of the best starts for kids levy have directly addressed those disparities through promotion, prevention and early intervention, allowing King County's children, youth and families to be happy, healthy, safe and thriving, and

WHEREAS, sustained investment in funded strategies and programs is necessary to fully realize long-term beneficial impacts for children, families and communities, and

WHEREAS, the King County council is considering whether to submit to the qualified electors for their approval in 2021 a ballot measure to renew the best starts for kids levy, and

WHEREAS, the purpose of an assessment report is to support council awareness of initiative implementation and outcomes to inform deliberations regarding the potential ballot measure for a renewed

levy;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The council requests that the executive submit for council review an assessment report of the best starts for kids levy-funded goals, strategies and programs. The assessment report submitted to council shall be developed in consultation with stakeholders, including, but not limited to, soliciting feedback from the regional policy committee, and shall include:

1. An assessment of how levy proceeds are being allocated, the status of strategy and program implementation, design or policy changes, challenges and outcomes. The report shall detail the context and impact of the best starts for kids levy-funded goals, strategies and programs outlined in Ordinance 18088, including, but not limited to:

- a. an analysis of investments by geographic area, including maps or data summaries reflecting available zip code data of residence of clients or participants served;
- b. an analysis of investments by strategy, including the rationale for and status of any unspent or reallocated levy proceeds;
- c. progress of levy implementation;
- d. preliminary measurement of changes experienced by families and communities;
- e. an analysis of the impact of investments in advancing equity and social justice and changing systems and policies of racial and other forms of oppression; and
- f. an analysis of levy proceeds used to fund technical assistance and capacity building; and

2. Recommendations that address the following:

a. how a renewed levy, or an increased or expanded levy, would deepen the current levy's work to dismantle systems of oppression, heal continuing wounds and realize justice for black, indigenous and people of color across all strategies;

b. whether to maintain or modify the best starts for kids levy's three primary goals enumerated in the

implementation plan approved in Ordinance 18373, which are to ensure that: babies are born healthy; King County is a place where everyone has equitable opportunities for health and safety as they progress through childhood; and communities offer safe, welcoming and healthy environments that help improve outcomes for all of King County's children and families, regardless of where they live;

c. whether to maintain or modify the relative allocations of levy proceeds to each goal area;

d. whether a renewed levy, or an increased or expanded levy, should incorporate new or revised goals or strategies such as child care, recommendations from the children and families strategy task force or other county efforts focused on children and youth;

e. how a renewed levy would align and coordinate with programs such as: the veterans, seniors and human services levy; mental illness and drug dependency fund; children and families strategy task force recommendations; the Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account; and other federal, state and local funding streams and programs to integrate, align and avoid duplication of efforts;

f. whether a renewed levy should retain, or make modifications to, existing strategies that are intended to: support parents, families and caregivers; screen children to prevent potential problems and intervene early to link to treatment; cultivate caregiver knowledge; support high-quality childcare; build resiliency of youth and reduce risky behaviors; meet the health and behavior needs of youth; create healthy and safe environments for youth; help youth stay connected to their families and communities; help young adults who have had challenges successfully transition into adulthood; stop the school-to-prison pipeline; support priorities and strategies to facilitate collaboration with communities that have much to gain; engage multiple organizations in institutional, system and policy change; and prevent youth and family homelessness;

g. how a renewed levy would benefit the entire region while targeting resources to those most in need; and

h. whether a renewed levy should modify any, or any combination of, the role; the structure or the representation of the children and youth advisory board.

B. The executive shall file the assessment report requested by this motion by September 30, 2020, in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, the policy staff director and the lead staff for the committee of the whole and the regional policy committee, or their successors. The report shall be accompanied by a proposed motion accepting the report.