



Legislation Text

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Clerk 04/01/2021

A MOTION affirming the King County council's support for the emotional and mental health programs under development by the King County sheriff's office; and requesting the sheriff's office provide a report evaluating the programs developed by the temporary wellness and resiliency deputy coordinate position.

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers face an extraordinary amount of work-related stress, often responding to traumatic situations, and

WHEREAS, some of those traumatic situations law enforcement officers must respond to on a daily basis can involve cases of child abuse, domestic violence and homicide, and

WHEREAS, repeated exposure to these traumatic and stressful incidents too often causes anxiety, posttraumatic stress disorder, depression and thoughts of suicide, and

WHEREAS, almost one in four law enforcement officers have had thoughts of suicide at some point in their life and the suicide rate for police officers is four times that of firefighters, with the number of law enforcement officer deaths by suicide is 2.3 times that of deaths by homicide, and

WHEREAS, between seven and nineteen percent of law enforcement officers have symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, compared to three point five percent of the general population, and

WHEREAS, some studies have reported that law enforcement officers may suffer from mental health related issues at a higher rate than the general population, they often self-medicate with drugs or alcohol in search of relief, and

WHEREAS, because frontline workers and first responders may turn to drugs and alcohol to forget

about these traumatic incidents they face on the job, they also use substances to help them sleep when nightmares occur and keep them up at night, and

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers are tasked with making quick decisions in emergency situations; decisions which are monitored and judged by the entire county, and

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers are also on call for tremendous amounts of time, working overnight shifts and rotating hours, which can often result in a fatigue and a lack of sleep critical for effective decision making in high-stress and emergency situations, and

WHEREAS, nontraditional work hours can also result in an unhealthy work-life balance and a lack of quality time spent with family and friends, and

WHEREAS, as the King County sheriff's office enters a time of transition after the passage of charter amendments 5 and 6 in November 2020, sheriff's deputies face additional anxiety from the uncertainty of their future duties and operations, and

WHEREAS, law enforcement officers may not willingly seek out the mental health or substance use disorder resources or support they need, and so should be offered and encouraged to use mental health and wellness programs developed by fellow officers, and

WHEREAS, happier and healthier officers will improve on-the-job performance and ultimately make use-of-force instances and community complaints less likely, and they will have better interaction with community members;

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

A. The council affirms its support of the King County sheriff's office creation of the twelve-month temporary wellness and resiliency deputy coordinator position and the health and wellness programs to be developed over the next year.

B. The council requests that the sheriff report to the council on the health and wellness programs developed by the wellness and resiliency deputy coordinator over the twelve-month term of the position. The

report should include:

1. A description of the health and wellness programs developed by the wellness and resiliency deputy coordinator that will be offered to sheriff's office personnel, including coping with stress, substance use through alcohol and drug dependency, mental health and willingness to seek help;

2. An assessment of the participation rates of sworn officers and civilian staff for each health and wellness program offered to sheriff's office personnel; and

3. An evaluation of the effectiveness of the health and wellness programs offered to sheriff's office personnel.

C. The sheriff is requested to transmit the report no later than fifteen months from the date of passage of this motion. The report should be filed electronically with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electric copy to all

councilmembers, the council chief of staff and the lead staff to the law and justice committee or its successor.