



Legislation Text

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Clerk 03/30/2021

AN ORDINANCE providing for the submission to the qualified electors of King County at a special election to be held in King County on August 3, 2021, of a proposition providing for resident oversight and authorizing a property tax levy in excess of the levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW for a six-year consecutive period at a rate of not more than \$0.19 per one thousand dollars of assessed valuation in the first year, and limiting annual levy increases to three percent in the five succeeding years, all for the purpose of funding prevention and early intervention strategies and a capital grants program to improve the health and well-being of children, youth and their communities.

STATEMENT OF FACTS:

1. In 2015, King County enacted Ordinance 18088, placing a six-year Best Starts for Kids levy on the ballot. King County residents voted and approved the Best Starts for Kids levy to fund programs and services that support promotion, prevention and early intervention for King County's children, youth and families.
2. The goals of the Best Starts for Kids levy that voters approved in 2015 are to ensure 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.
3. Since its inception, the Best Starts for Kids levy has funded five hundred and seventy

programs and has reached over five hundred seven thousand babies, children, youth and families throughout the county with community-driven programming. Levy programs trained sixty-eight thousand child care providers, pediatricians, community health workers and other staff who work with children and youth on healthy child development and racially and culturally appropriate care. The Best Starts for Kids levy distributes resources across the region, focusing investments on those most in need.

4. In June 2020, the council directed the executive in Motion 15651 to produce an assessment report to inform deliberations regarding renewal of the current Best Starts for Kids levy. The report includes assessment of early measurements and successes, challenges in launching this first levy, an analysis of the levy's advancement of equity and early recommendations for renewal. Executive staff combined findings of staff research, a community survey conducted in June 2020, community input from ten geographically based virtual community listening sessions as well as five virtual stakeholder listening sessions, and input from ongoing Best Starts for Kids community partner learning circles. In total, almost seven hundred and twenty community responses informed completion of the report. The council accepted the assessment report in Motion 15769.

5. The existing Best Starts for Kids levy will expire at the end of 2021. Renewal of the Best Starts for Kids levy requires voter approval. Acknowledging the importance of the Best Starts for Kids levy in serving the county's children, youth and families with upstream promotion, prevention and early intervention programs, and, in light of the current impact the COVID-19 pandemic, has had on the health and well-being of the children, youth and families of King County as well as the regional economic and human services systems including child care, the Best Starts for Kids levy warrants renewal.

6. Over twenty-five thousand babies are born in King County each year. County residents under

twenty-five years old comprise thirty percent of the population. Fifty-three percent of the people under eighteen years old in King County are Black, Indigenous and People of Color.

7. Research shows that there are significant disparities in the health and well-being of King County residents. The percentage of children five and under living in poverty is as low as five percent in some regions of the county and as high as fifteen percent in other regions. Infant mortality is four times higher for American Indian/Alaskan Natives compared to whites and more than two times higher for African Americans. Thirty-eight percent of toddler and preschoolers are not flourishing and resilient in King County, and that number rises to seventy-one percent for elementary-aged children. Among youth, thirty-three percent report depressive feelings and twenty-four percent report using alcohol or other illicit drugs. Twenty-six percent of youth say they do not have an adult they can talk to and thirty-three percent do not feel strong connection to their family. Two thousand students, disproportionately low income and Black, Indigenous and People of Color, drop out of school each year in King County while research shows that by 2024, almost ninety percent of living wage jobs in the county will require some sort of post-secondary education.

8. Child care is unaffordable for many families in King County, and child care for our youngest residents now costs more than in-state, public college tuition. King County's child care workforce is disproportionately made up of women and Black, Indigenous and People of Color, as well as immigrants and refugees. Wages remain low, with providers earning near-poverty-level salaries.

9. In 2010, Ordinance 16897 was enacted, establishing the King County Strategic Plan, 2010-2014. In 2015, the council passed Motion 14317, updating and revising King County's vision, mission, guiding principles and goals. Included within the county's goals are improving the health and well-being of all people in King County, implementing alternatives to divert people

from the criminal justice system and ensuring that county government operates efficiently and effectively and is accountable to the public.

10. The county's guiding principles in the King County Strategic Plan, 2010-2014 command that pursuit of the county's goals should address the root causes of inequities to provide equal access for all. In 2015, the county established the office of equity and social justice and, the following year, the office of equity and social justice produced the 2016-2022 Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan. King County actively engages in equity and social justice efforts to eliminate racially and ethnically disparate health and human services outcomes in King County, and this is a priority that shall guide the council and the executive in the process of designing, administering and evaluating the policies and programs related to the renewed Best Starts for Kids levy, if approved by voters.

11. In 2014, Ordinance 17738 was enacted, establishing the youth action plan task force and providing policy direction regarding the development of a youth action plan. In addition to their work with the youth action plan, the youth action plan task force members helped shape the current Best Starts for Kids levy. In 2015, the council passed Motion 14378, adopting the completed youth action plan. The youth action plan continues to provide guidance and policy direction for the Best Starts for Kids levy.

12. The strategies supported by the Best Starts for Kids levy achieve a variety of outcomes. Headline indicators used to measure these outcomes for children under six include the following: babies born with healthy birth outcomes; children who are flourishing and resilient; children who are ready for kindergarten; and children who are free from abuse or neglect. Headline indicators for children and youth five to twenty-four years old include the following: third graders who meet reading standards; fourth graders who meet math standards; youth who are flourishing and resilient; youth and young adults who are in excellent or very good health;

youth who graduated from high school on time; youth and young adults in school or working; high school graduates who earn a college degree or career credential; and youth who are not using illegal substances. Headline indicators for Communities of Opportunity include: adults reporting good or excellent health; youth who have an adult to turn to for help; individuals engaged in civic activities; households paying less than thirty percent or less than fifty percent of their income for housing; local residents who are displaced; youth who eat fruit and vegetables at least four times a day; households with income above two hundred percent of poverty; and youth and young adults in school or working.

BE IT ORDAINED BY THE COUNCIL OF KING COUNTY:

SECTION 1. Definitions. The definitions in this section apply throughout this ordinance unless the context clearly requires otherwise.

A. "Child care workforce demonstration project" means a strategy to improve the provision of child care in King County supplementing wages of a test group of persons who provide child care in exchange for wages and then reporting out on the effects of the strategy upon the quality of child care, including, but not limited to, the strategy's effects upon workforce turnover, workforce experience of poverty and workforce experience levels.

B. "Children and youth" means persons through twenty-four years old.

C. "Communities of opportunity" means the strategy described in Section VII of the Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan, that is Attachment A to Ordinance 18373. Communities of Opportunity is designed to improve equity by addressing the race- and place-based inequitable health and well-being outcomes in King County. Communities of Opportunity supports communities in improving the health, social and economic outcomes of those specific communities, and does so by partnering with communities to shape and own solutions.

D. "King County child care subsidy program" means a strategy to reduce or fully subsidize the cost of

child care to low-income families in King County.

E. "Levy" means the levy of regular property taxes for the specific purposes and term provided in this ordinance and authorized by the electorate in accordance with Washington law.

F. "Levy proceeds" means the principal amount of moneys raised by the levy and any interest earnings on the moneys.

G. "Limit factor" for the purposes of calculating the levy limitations in RCW 84.55.010, means one hundred three percent.

H. "Strategy" means a program, service, activity, initiative or capital investment intended to achieve the purposes described in subsection 4.B. of this ordinance.

I. "Technical assistance and capacity building" means assisting organizations seeking or receiving levy proceeds to enable the organizations to apply for, implement and improve delivery of a strategy or strategies for which expenditures of this levy are eligible.

J. "Youth and family homelessness prevention initiative" means an initiative intended to prevent and divert children and youth and their families from becoming homeless.

SECTION 2. Levy submittal. To provide necessary moneys for the purposes identified in section 4 of this ordinance, the King County council shall submit to the qualified electors of the county a proposition authorizing a regular property tax levy in excess of the levy limitation contained in chapter 84.55 RCW for six consecutive years, with collection commencing in 2022, at a rate not to exceed \$0.19 per one thousand dollars of assessed value in the first year of the levy period. The dollar amount of the levy in the first year shall be the base upon which the levy amounts in year two through six shall be calculated. In accordance with RCW 84.55.050, the levy shall be a regular property tax levy subject to the limit factor as defined in section 1 of this ordinance.

SECTION 3. Deposit of levy proceeds. The levy proceeds shall be deposited into a dedicated subfund of the best starts for kids fund, or its successor.

SECTION 4. Eligible expenditures.

A. If approved by the qualified electors of the county, such sums from the first year's levy proceeds as are necessary may be used to provide for the costs and charges incurred by the county that are attributable to the election.

B. After the amount authorized in subsection A. of this section, the remaining levy proceeds shall be used to:

1. Promote improved health and well-being outcomes of children and youth, as well as the families and the communities in which they live, including, but not limited to: capital investments for buildings and facilities, including, but not limited to, housing, that serve children and youth; ensuring adequate services and supports for pregnant persons and newborns; access to safe and healthy food; developmental screening for children and youth; programs that care for children and youth when they are not at home including child care and out-of-school-time programs; programs and services that promote social and emotional well-being, mental health and a sense of belonging, connection and positive identity in children and youth; and programs and services that provide academic support and promote academic achievement;

2. Prevent and intervene early on negative outcomes, including, but not limited to, poor birth outcomes, developmental delays, chronic disease, social emotional isolation, mental health challenges, substance abuse, dropping out of school, homelessness, domestic violence and effects of systemic racism and incarceration;

3. Reduce inequities in outcomes for children and youth in the county; and

4. Strengthen, improve, better coordinate, integrate and encourage innovation in health and human services systems and the agencies, organizations and groups addressing the needs of children and youth, their families and their communities.

C. Of the eligible expenditures described in subsection B. of this section, an amount of each year's levy proceeds shall be allocated first for the purposes in subsections D. and E. of this section. In the levy's first year,

which is 2022, the total amount allocated for the purposes in subsection D. of this section shall be twenty-two and one-half percent of the first year's levy proceeds remaining after the amount authorized in subsection A. of this section. In the levy's subsequent years, the amount to be allocated for the purposes in subsections D. and E. of this section shall be allocated so that the six-year total sum of levy proceeds allocated for the purposes in subsection D. of this section shall be no less than two-hundred forty million dollars. The implementation plan required by section 7 of this ordinance shall describe the annual allocations of levy proceeds that accomplish allocation requirements of this subsection C. of this section. After the annual allocation of levy proceeds required by this subsection C. of this section, each year's remaining levy proceeds shall be divided in the following proportions and used for the following purposes:

1. Fifty percent shall be used to plan, provide, fund and administer strategies focused on children and youth under six years old and their caregivers, pregnant persons and individuals or families concerning pregnancy.
2. Thirty-seven percent shall be used to plan, provide, fund and administer strategies focused on children and youth age five or older;
3. Eight percent shall be used to plan, provide, fund and administer Communities of Opportunity; and
4. Five percent shall be used to plan, provide, fund and administer the following:
 - a. performance measurement of levy-funded strategies, evaluation and data collection activities;
 - b. stipends for children and youth serving as appointed members of the King County children and youth advisory board under conditions prescribed by the final children and youth advisory board update report required by section 6 of this ordinance in the final form of the children and youth advisory board update report that the council adopts by ordinance.
 - c. services identified in subsection B. of this section provided by metropolitan park districts in King County. Of the moneys identified in this subsection C.4.c., an amount equal to the lost revenues to the metropolitan park districts resulting from prorationing as mandated by RCW 84.52.010, up to one million

dollars, shall be provided to those metropolitan park districts if authorized by the county council by ordinance;

d. services identified in subsection B. of this section provided by fire districts, in an amount equal to the lost revenues to the fire districts in King County resulting from prorationing, as mandated by RCW 84.52.010, for those services, to the extent the prorationing was caused solely by this levy and if authorized by the county council by ordinance; and

e. services identified in subsection B. of this section provided by public hospital districts, in an amount equal to the lost revenues to the public hospital districts in King County resulting from prorationing, as mandated by RCW 84.52.010, for those services, to the extent the prorationing was caused solely by this levy and if authorized by the county council by ordinance.

D. Except for levy proceeds reserved for the purposes in subsection E. of this section, the levy proceeds annually reserved in subsection C. of this section shall be used to plan, provide, fund, administer, measure performance and evaluate a youth and family homelessness prevention initiative, a King County child care subsidy program, a child care workforce demonstration project and technical assistance and capacity building activities, including one million dollars annually for a capacity building grant program that includes providing support to grantees to assist with the development of infrastructure in geographic locations lacking services or service infrastructure. The grant program to support capacity building that includes providing support to grantees to assist with the development of infrastructure in geographic locations lacking services or service infrastructure shall be described in the implementation plan required in section 7 of this ordinance and must include the development of new organizations and expansion of existing organizations. The youth and family homelessness prevention initiative, King County child care subsidy program, child care workforce demonstration project and technical assistance and capacity building activities required in this subsection shall be described in the implementation plan required in section 7 of this ordinance.

E. Except as otherwise provided in this subsection, if the total projected levy proceeds exceeds eight hundred twenty-two million dollars, the levy proceeds greater than eight hundred twenty-two million dollars

shall be used to provide grants designed to support repairs and expansion of buildings and facilities, that serve children and youth, and to support the construction of new buildings and facilities that will serve children and youth. Such buildings and facilities that serve children and youth shall include, but not be limited to, housing and child care, early learning and recreational facilities. However, the total levy proceeds used to provide grants shall not exceed fifty million dollars. Additionally, if the total projected levy proceeds falls below eight hundred seventy-two million dollars, the amount of levy proceeds allocated for the purposes of this subsection shall be first reduced before any other reduction in the total amounts allocated for the purposes in subsections C. and D. of this section. This capital grants program shall be described in the implementation plan required in section 7 of this ordinance. Additionally, the executive shall propose in the implementation plan required in section 7 of this ordinance the amount of levy proceeds to be allocated for the capital grants program and a process for determining annually if a reduction to the amount of levy proceeds allocated for the purposes of this subsection is necessary and the amount of any such reduction. The executive shall also propose in the implementation plan required in section 7 of this ordinance a policy for prioritizing capital investments in new buildings or facilities as compared to capital investments in existing buildings or facilities.

SECTION 5. Call for special election. In accordance with RCW 29A.04.321, the King County council hereby calls for a special election to be held in conjunction with the primary election on August 03, 2021, to consider a proposition authorizing a regular property tax levy for the purposes described in this ordinance. The King County director of elections shall cause notice to be given of this ordinance in accordance with the state constitution and general law and to submit to the qualified electors of the county, at the said special county election, the proposition hereinafter set forth. The clerk of the council shall certify that proposition to the director of elections in substantially the following form:

PROPOSITION___: The King County Council passed Ordinance ___ concerning funding to improve the well-being of children, youth, families and communities. If approved, this proposition would fund promotion of positive outcomes, prevention and early intervention

related to: child care; healthy pregnancy; newborn family supports; youth development; community well-being; and crisis prevention and intervention for children and youth, including homelessness prevention. It would authorize an additional six-year property tax levy for collection beginning in 2022 at \$0.19 per \$1,000 of assessed valuation with the 2022 levy amount being the base for calculating annual increases of up to 3% in 2022 - 2026. Should this proposition be:

Approved? _____

Rejected? _____

SECTION 6. Governance. The King County children and youth advisory board described in K.C.C. 2A.300.510 shall serve as the oversight and advisory board for the levy and its strategies, except for Communities of Opportunity, if the levy is approved by the qualified electors of the county. The communities of opportunity-best starts for kids levy advisory board described in K.C.C. 2A.300.520 shall serve as the advisory body for Communities of Opportunity if the levy is approved by the qualified electors of the county. If the levy is approved by the qualified electors of the county, the executive shall by October 01, 2021, transmit to the council for consideration and adoption by ordinance a best starts for kids governance update report that describes and explains necessary and recommended changes to sections of the King County Code and applicable ordinances that describe the composition and duties of the King County children and youth advisory board and the communities of opportunity-best starts for kids levy advisory board. A proposed ordinance or ordinances shall accompany the best starts for kids governance update report, which ordinance or ordinances, upon enactment, would accomplish the changes recommended by the best starts for kids governance update report. Among the purposes of recommended changes listed and described within the best starts for kids governance update report shall be to update the King County children and youth advisory board's duties and composition as needed to enable the King County children and youth advisory board to oversee and advise on the levy and to extend the existence of the communities of opportunity-best starts for kids levy advisory board

to coincide with the levy. The executive shall consult with the King County children and youth advisory board and the communities of opportunity-best starts for kids levy advisory board in preparing the children and youth advisory board update report.

SECTION 7. Implementation plan.

A.1. Not later than July 31, 2021, the executive shall transmit to the council for review and adoption by ordinance a proposed Best Starts for Kids implementation plan that identifies the strategies to be funded and outcomes to be achieved with the use of levy proceeds described in section 4 of this ordinance. The Best Starts for Kids implementation plan shall also include a framework to measure the performance of levy strategies in achieving their outcomes and require an annual report on levy expenditures, services and outcomes, including:

- a. total expenditures of levy proceeds by program area by ZIP Code in King County; and
- b. the number of individuals receiving levy-funded services by program area by ZIP Code in King

County of where the individuals reside at the time of service.

2. The executive shall develop the proposed Best Starts for Kids implementation plan in consultation with the King County children and youth advisory board and the communities of opportunity-best starts for kids levy advisory board. In developing the Best Starts for Kids implementation plan required in this section 7, the executive shall consider and promote harmony with the previous Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan that is Attachment A to Ordinance 18373, specifically describing which strategies from the previous Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan shall continue in the proposed Best Starts for Kids implementation plan.

Additionally, in developing the Best Starts for Kids implementation plan, the executive shall ensure that residents throughout King County and in any city in King County can access levy-funded strategies regardless of the availability of similar services and programs provided by their city or in their community. In developing the proposed Best Starts for Kids implementation plan, the executive shall also to the maximum extent possible take into consideration the King County Youth Action Plan, adopted by Motion 14378.

B. Levy proceeds may not be expended for the purposes described in section 4 of this ordinance until the effective date of the ordinance with which the Best Starts for Kids implementation plan is adopted.

SECTION 8. Exemption. The additional regular property taxes authorized by this ordinance shall be included in any real property tax exemption authorized by RCW 84.36.381.

SECTION 9. Ratification and confirmation. Certification of the proposition by the clerk of the county council to the director of elections in accordance with law before the general election on August 3, 2021, and any other act consistent with the authority and before the effective date of this ordinance are hereby ratified and confirmed.

SECTION 10. Severability. If any provision of this ordinance or its application to any person or circumstance is held invalid, the remainder of the ordinance or the application of the provision to other persons or circumstances is not affected.