Legislation Details (With Text)

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Title:	A RESOLUTION strongly recommending helmet use as a tool to prevent injuries and fatalities associated with head injuries to bicycle and other wheeled device riders of all ages and a comprehensive approach to bicycle safety.		
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Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
2/17/2022	1	Board of Health	Passed as Amended	Pass
10/21/2021	1	Board of Health	Deferred	

Clerk 02/25/2022

A RESOLUTION strongly recommending helmet use as a tool to prevent injuries and fatalities associated with head injuries to bicycle and other wheeled device riders of all ages and a comprehensive approach to bicycle safety.

WHEREAS, bicycling is an important recreational activity and mode of transportation that provides valuable exercise and supports sustainable transportation to fight climate change and promote health, and

WHEREAS, head and brain injuries are a major cause of disability and death associated with the operation of a bicycle on public roadways and bicycle paths, and

WHEREAS, more than one thousand Americans die annually from bicycle related injuries. Approximately forty percent of those deaths are due to traumatic brain injuries, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and

WHEREAS, a significant number of individuals who survive head injuries do not return to a normal life and are often left with profound disability and long-lasting conditions, and

WHEREAS, in 2020, thirty-nine individuals were injured or killed riding or as a passenger on a bicycle King County, four of which were fatal, and

WHEREAS, the total economic burden in King County to government and society from bicycle involved crashes, both helmeted and unhelmeted, averaged $190 to 300 million a year from 2010 to 2020, and

WHEREAS, bicycle helmets prevent head injuries suffered by bicycle riders during a crash or fall, reducing the risk of head, brain and severe brain injury by sixty-three to eighty-eight percent according to a 2000 Cochrane review, and

WHEREAS, King County has been a leader in reducing preventable injuries and deaths in children through the promotion of bicycle helmet use, and

WHEREAS, the King County Board of Health recognizes that a comprehensive approach to bicycle safety must include helmet use as well as safe built environments, access to helmets and education about use, and ensuring that all riders are able to safely participate without the barriers imposed by racism, sexism and other forms of oppression, and

WHEREAS, on June 18, 2020, the board passed Resolution 20-08 declaring racism a public health crisis and committed to assessing, revising, and writing its policies, including the Board of Health Code, with a racial justice and equity lens, and

WHEREAS, on June 17, 2021, the board heard Briefing 21-B10, a panel discussion on enforcement of bicycle helmet laws in King County, which described the disparate enforcement by police officers of the board's helmet regulation. Data presented demonstrated that police officers issued citations more frequently to Black, Indigenous and people of color more frequently than to white cyclists. Persons experiencing homelessness also reported that police officers commonly cited the helmet requirement as the reason for stopping the cyclists, and

WHEREAS, in his letter dated January 14, 2022 to the Office of Inspector General, Seattle Police Chief

Adrian Diaz announced the Department's policy to de-prioritize non-criminal, low-risk public safety traffic violations, including bicycle helmet violations, and will not longer treat bicycle helmet violations as a primary reason to engage in a traffic stop, and

WHEREAS, in November 2021, the King County Council allocated $221,000 in Ordinance 19364 to support bicycle helmet distribution with a focus on unhoused individuals and individuals who historically have been disproportionately impacted by inequities and discrimination, and

WHEREAS, helmet use can protect riders of a variety of vehicle types where there is an increased risk of injury, such as bicycles, scooters, skateboards, roller skates, rollerblades and other wheeled devices, and

WHEREAS, the board believes in an approach to helmet use that does not involve law enforcement in order to ensure that Black, Indigenous and people of color do not bear the burden of enforcement and the resulting risk of negative outcome and includes an emphasis on education and access for all, and

WHEREAS, the board reaffirms its commitment to addressing racism as a public health crisis;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Health of King County:

A. The board strongly recommends universal helmet use for all age riders in King County.

B. The board members will support efforts that seek to expand availability of and lower barriers for individuals of all incomes to have access to helmets.

C. The board commits to work with local community partners and jurisdictions to expand access to low - and no-cost helmets, provide education on helmet safety and support the improvement of community infrastructure to support safety for bicycle and other modes of active transportation.

D. The board encourages all local jurisdictions to actively promote universal helmet use, and to take steps to ensure that helmet regulations are not being applied inequitably.

E. The board encourages the King County Council to use the Council's budgetary authority to support a study of helmet use among bicycle riders that may include a periodic review of the Washington State Department of Health Trauma Registry over multiple years to monitor and compare bicycle related injuries and

outcomes before and after the repeal of the Board's helmet law. The board recommends that any analysis include an equity review with results presented to the board no sooner than 2024 and no later than 2026 and also encourages the King County Council to use the Council's budget

authority to support a public education campaign regarding bicycle safety and particularly the use of helmets.

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