



Legislation Text

File #: 2022-0001, **Version:** 3

A MOTION declaring fentanyl-related overdoses a public health crisis and requesting the executive to identify strategies and recommendations regarding the county's public health response.

WHEREAS, over the past two decades the United States has experienced a growing crisis in opioid-related overdose deaths, and

WHEREAS, during that time, the annual number of overdose deaths in the United States has more than quadrupled from approximately seventeen thousand five hundred in 2000 to more than eighty-one thousand in 2020, and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that 2020 marked the highest number of overdose deaths ever reported in one year, and

WHEREAS, while overdose deaths were already increasing in the months preceding the COVID-19 pandemic, the latest numbers suggest an acceleration of overdose deaths during the pandemic, and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention also reports that illicitly manufactured fentanyl appears to be the primary driver of increases in overdose deaths, and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention recently published a report showing the economic cost of fatal opioid overdoses in 2017 totaled eight billion five hundred million dollars in Washington state and more than five hundred fifty billion dollars nationwide, and

WHEREAS, fentanyl is a potent synthetic opioid drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use as an analgesic and anesthetic that is approximately fifty times more potent than heroin and one hundred times more potent than morphine, and

WHEREAS, the Drug Enforcement Agency reported in 2020 that the increase in trafficking, distribution and abuse of illicitly produced fentanyl is primarily responsible for fueling the record-level overdose deaths observed nationwide, and

WHEREAS, between 2018 and 2020, fentanyl-related overdose deaths increased one hundred sixty-four percent in King County, and

WHEREAS, three hundred ninety-six fentanyl-involved fatal overdoses have occurred in King County in 2021, which is a one hundred thirty-three percent increase from 2020 and a two hundred sixty percent increase from 2019, and sets a new record for fentanyl-related deaths in King County in a single year; and

WHEREAS, as of June 7, 2022, two-hundred forty-nine fentanyl-involved fatal overdoses have occurred in King County in 2022, an additional forty-four percent increase over the same period last year; and

WHEREAS, approximately half of all overdose-related deaths in 2021 as of December 16 involved fentanyl;

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

A. The council declares the widespread distribution of fentanyl and fentanyl-related overdoses, including fatal and non-fatal overdoses, a public health crisis.

B. The council requests the executive to work with public health - Seattle & King County to:

1. Identify, in consultation with public health - Seattle & King County and the King County department of community and human services, existing strategies and resources to reduce fentanyl-involved overdoses; and

2. Make recommendations to increase King County's public health response regarding fentanyl-involved overdoses, including areas that King County could further invest in to prevent fentanyl-involved overdoses.