

CITY COUNCIL STUDY SESSION

King County Crisis Care Centers Levy

Genesee Adkins, Chief of External Affairs, 452-7849

Helena Stephens, Equity and Regional Policy Advisor, 452-2834

City Manager's Office

DIRECTION NEEDED FROM COUNCIL**INFORMATION
ONLY**

King County Department of Community and Human Services (DCHS) Director Leo Flor and Chief of Staff Kelly Rider will present information on King County's proposed Crisis Care Centers Levy.

Tonight's presentation is an opportunity to learn about King County's development of the upcoming ballot measure and the proposed services for East King County and to ask questions.

RECOMMENDATION

N/A

BACKGROUND & ANALYSIS

The King County April 25 special election ballot will include \$1.25 billion behavioral health levy. The primary purpose of the levy is to create five new regional crisis care centers that would provide 24/7 walk-in access. The care centers would offer multiple levels of behavioral health crisis care, including 23-hour observation units, 14-day crisis stabilization units, and onsite designated crisis responders to make connections to involuntary care if needed. The levy will fund immediate services while the new centers are being constructed.

In addition to creating crisis care centers, the levy has two secondary purposes:

- Restore the number of mental health residential treatment beds in King County to at least 355 beds and expand the availability and sustainability of residential treatment in King County.
 - The County currently has 244 residential mental health beds. As of July 2022, people wait an average of 44 days before being placed in a mental health treatment bed.
- Increase the sustainability and representativeness of the behavioral health workforce in King County.
 - The levy proposes to improve financial sustainability for the behavioral health workforce through increased wages, apprenticeship programming, and reduction of costs such as insurance, childcare, caregiving and fees or tuition associated with behavioral health training and certification.

The five new centers would be distributed geographically across the county. At least one center would be located in east King County, which includes Beaux Arts, Bellevue, Carnation, Clyde Hill, Hunts Point, Issaquah, Medina, Mercer Island, Newcastle, North Bend, Redmond, Sammamish, Snoqualmie, and Yarrow Point. At least one center will specifically serve persons younger than 19.

If approved by voters, the levy would be funded by a nine-year levy lid lift, which would increase the levy rate by 14.5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. On February 7, 2023, the King County Council approved the levy to be added to the April 2023 ballot; revenues would begin collection in 2024 if approved by voters. The levy would generate approximately \$1.25 billion over nine years.

Behavioral Healthcare in King County

Behavioral health care services in King County do not meet current demand. King County is currently without a walk-in behavioral health urgent care facility. Only one 46-bed behavioral health crisis facility is in operation for the entire county. The region's only voluntary crisis facility resource, the Crisis Solutions Center in Seattle, requires a first responder or hospital referral due to its limited capacity. Residential treatment beds are on a steady decline in King County and beyond.

Since 2018, King County has lost approximately one-third of its residential mental health beds. Several beds were lost due to a lack of funding. King County currently has a total of 244 residential treatment beds for people with behavioral health disorders, including the County's recent purchase of Cascade Hall, a 64-bed residential treatment center in North Seattle. The current supply of residential mental health beds is not sufficient to meet demand.

The need for behavioral health services in King County is growing. In recent years there has been an increase in calls to crisis lines, clients served by crisis response programs, and investigations into the need for involuntary behavioral health treatment.

On March 8, 2023, the City of Kirkland partnered with the cities of Bothell, Kenmore, Lake Forest Park and Shoreline to announce the siting of a new multi-services crisis response center dedicated to serving the behavioral health needs of community members across north and northeast King County. The new crisis center will be operated by Connections Health Solutions, a national innovator in behavioral health crisis care. The facility will be located in Kirkland's Totem Lake neighborhood, near Evergreen Hospital. The \$21.5M State and King county grant funded crisis response center will be the first of its kind in King County to provide a spectrum of care services, from walk-in mental health urgent care to continued stabilization of behavioral health or substance use crisis. This new center at Totem Lake is not a part of the April levy but would complement the services and facilities included in the Levy.

Levy Governance

The proposed levy was referred to the King County Regional Policy Committee (RPC) and the Budget and Fiscal Management Committee. Bellevue Councilmember John Stokes is a Sound Cities Association appointee to the RPC, which made several amendments to the levy ballot measure,

including requiring King County to report on expenditures by ZIP code. This data will provide transparency as to whether levy proceeds are distributed appropriately across the County.

Councilmember Stokes supported the amendments and the RPC's recommendation that the King County Council adopt an ordinance to place the levy on the April 25 ballot. The King County Council then unanimously approved the ordinance.

If approved by King County voters, the Crisis Care Centers Levy requires the Executive to transmit to the county council a proposed levy implementation plan by December 31, 2023. The proposed implementation plan will direct levy expenditures and set more detailed implementation policies. The plan will be referred to the RPC for review and potential amendment before the King County Council considers adoption.

POLICY & FISCAL IMPACTS

Policy Impact

N/A

Fiscal Impact

The King County Executive has proposed funding these investments with a nine-year levy lid lift, which would increase the levy rate by 14.5 cents per \$1,000 of assessed value. If approved by the King County voters, the levy will begin collection in 2024. The levy would generate approximately \$1.25 billion over nine years.

OPTIONS

N/A

ATTACHMENTS

N/A

AVAILABLE IN COUNCIL LIBRARY

N/A