



King County

# King County 2024 Legislative Priorities

## Allow Local Governments to Fund Critical Services, Build Housing, and Reduce Homelessness

King County faces a severe revenue deficit because the Legislature capped property taxes and limits revenue options for counties. Housing and homelessness continue to be a critical issue for King County residents. To resolve these issues, the Legislature should:

- lift the arbitrary cap on local government property tax;
- remove the non-supplant language restricting King County's ability to ask voters to increase revenue for existing services;
- provide counties with flexible and progressive revenue opportunities for county government services and for county road and bridge preservation; and,
- provide robust operating and capital investments across the housing continuum, including affordable housing, permanent supportive housing, and emergency housing and shelters.

## Behavioral Health: Build on Investments Strengthening Access to Care

The state's own rate study reports that Medicaid is falling far short of funding the full cost of behavioral health care. As a result, **the State should establish minimum payments for behavioral health treatment that serves those farthest from, and most in need of, care.**

Additionally, too many individuals have gone without the mental health and addiction/recovery care they need, leading to a cycle of hospitalization, homelessness, and criminal-legal system involvement. Tragically for some, this cycle is fatal. To reverse this inequitable and costly cycle, the State must:

- provide evaluation and treatment services to people in acute behavioral health crises; and,
- secure access to community-based behavioral health facilities, substance use disorder treatment, and engagement services; and,
- provide resources to halt the fentanyl overdose crisis.

## Stabilize Harborview Medical Center Revenue

Harborview Medical Center is the state's only Level One trauma center and a safety net hospital, providing specialized and indigent treatment for residents across the state. Yet, Harborview operation is unsustainable with current funding. King County needs the Legislature to **expand the authorized use of the county hospital maintenance tax to include operation, capital, and debt service expenses** to ensure Harborview's viability.

## Bolster the Public Safety and Criminal Legal System

The public safety and criminal legal systems are overburdened and under-resourced. The Legislature can help offset these problems by:

- addressing gun violence through prevention;
- funding diversion programs and alternatives to incarceration;
- increasing correction officer academy slots; and,
- providing funding for criminal legal systems, including public defense and prosecution, courts, and the sheriff's office.

## Protect Our Climate and Environment

We must mitigate and prepare for the climate crisis and address the ongoing environmental decline. The Legislature can take three immediate steps to counteract these crises:

- enact the WRAP Act, enhancing and growing product stewardship programs to make products safer for people and the planet, from design to disposal;
- increase Climate Commitment Act (CCA) appropriations to the Natural Climate Solutions Account, and provide CCA funding to local governments, including King County, to rapidly reduce climate emissions and develop climate solutions, and take steps to reduce, mitigate, and eliminate PFAS, 6PPD and other forever chemical pollution; and,
- increase funding for the Trust Land Transfer program.

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