

Youth Development Executives of King County

Thriving Leaders. Thriving Organizations. Thriving Youth.



To: King County Councilmembers
(Submitted by email and as written public comment for the COW meeting on April 7)
From: Youth Development Executives of King County
Re: Moving Best Starts for Kids Renewal Forward
Date: April 6, 2021

Dear King County Councilmembers:

We write to you with strong support for the Best Starts for Kids Levy Renewal ordinance, as submitted by Executive Constantine, and moved forward with amendments by the Regional Policy Committee on March 26th. We encourage swiftly moving the legislation forward from the Committee of the Whole to the full Council. We are so thankful to live in a community that believes every young person should be happy, healthy, safe and thriving!

As babies who were born the year Best Starts for Kids originally passed are just now school aged, continuing to support their wellbeing as they enter their school years is as critical as ever, particularly as we begin to come out of the Covid-19 pandemic, and as we continue to battle the entrenched and institutional racism in our society. Thank you for your leadership in moving Best Starts for Kids forward towards renewal to ensure that this critical, equity-focused resource will be available for many more years to come.

We are glad to have hosted a community input session with our members this past fall, and have been engaged in BSK implementation since its inception. We are pleased that the renewal proposal also increases the “Sustain the Gain” allocation from 35 percent to 37 percent of the funding, as we strongly believe that young people continue to need supports throughout childhood and adolescence. We are pleased that the Out of School Time investments will be increased and new investments for Safe Transition to Adulthood will support older youth, our membership has been in support of both investments.

As you know, Youth Development Executives of King County is a coalition of more than 100 nonprofit youth serving organizations across King County, the vast majority focused on supporting children and youth of color and including dozens of Black, Indigenous and People of Color led organizations. Throughout the pandemic, our members have stayed open to provide essential supports to children and families, provided formal and informal behavioral health supports for young people as they have dealt with anxiety, uncertainty and ongoing trauma from systemic racism; shifted program efforts to deliver food and technology to families who relied on schools to provide essential supports, and generally navigated the most challenging and unprecedented time in our living memories. Having Best Starts for Kids funding in our community has helped many of these organizations stay open, when they could have otherwise faced closures.

The uniqueness and flexibility that Best Starts for Kids provides to deliver services and programs, and with the full spectrum of birth through 24 provides a safety net to our children and families in King County by supporting a strong community based provider community. Keeping funding focused on service delivery, and with attention towards contracts that cover the full cost of delivering programs, will help to keep providers strong, so they can provide the best programs and services to young people.

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While we believe the focus on programs and operations is critical, we also recognize the physical space needs that many of our providers have. With the Capital Amendment passed by the RPC, we encourage flexible use of those dollars (assuming revenue projections are correct) to support providers with a variety of space needs, whether that be for upgrading and improving space they rent or own; supporting rental support for providers who may be displaced; repurposing spaces (like churches or offices) for providers or other ways that help ensure programs can be offered in safe, functional and multipurpose places.

We hope that the King County Committee of the Whole will move swiftly towards putting Best Starts for Kids expansion on the ballot by early May, and preferably before! We thank you for your commitment to the children and youth of King County!

Sincerely,

Jessica Werner, YDEKC Executive Director
Rene Murry, YDEKC Public Policy Director
Youth Development Executives of King County
[YDEKC Members](#)