

*Distributed @ 8/31/05 BFM  
Laura Wells*

# King County Alliance for Human Services

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To: King County Council Budget Committee

August 31, 2005

Good morning. My name is Laura Wells and I am here representing the King County Alliance for Human Services. The Alliance includes human service providers from over 470 agencies and programs across the county and from many different types of services, as well as funders, representatives from local governments, and faith-based communities. The King County Alliance for Human Services has one goal: dedicated, adequate, stable funding for urgently needed community health and human services throughout King County. Our goal is to ensure that all people in need – veterans and non-veterans alike – have access to services that can change their lives.

I want to begin by saying "thank you." Thank you on behalf of the Alliance and all of the people we serve for your support of community health and human services. Over the past few years, you and your colleagues have cast gutsy votes in tough budget times to assure that people in need throughout King County suffer no **additional** reductions in county-funded services. Your past support for community health and human services has not gone unnoticed.

We know that you and other leaders throughout the county clearly understand the crisis our community faces. Funding of critical health and human services is inadequate. As reported by the King County Task Force on Regional Human Services, "...the regions' current health and human services response is unable to meet the basic health and human services needs of King County's residents, particularly as the population and the needs have grown."

The Task Force recommended a dedicated resource to alleviate the ongoing crisis in our county because "The current system is inadequately financed to meet the basic needs of our communities. Funding for human services has been steadily declining in recent years. A dedicated revenue source is needed to create stability to meet current needs, and to plan effectively for the future."

We support the Task Force's recommendation for a comprehensive solution to the funding shortage that jeopardizes the health, safety and well-being of King County residents. We do not believe that the ballot measure currently under consideration should be the next step toward this comprehensive solution.

A veteran in need absolutely deserves a bed in the Salvation Army shelter, which is partially funded by King County. And the veteran's family deserves a safe place to live, a quality place to learn a job skill and affordable child-care. Our vision is a system of support sufficiently comprehensive to make a difference in the lives of all who seek help.

Our position on this issue should not come as a surprise, since we've discussed it with most of you over the past 4 months. What members of the Alliance also want you to know that we are deeply saddened by the fact that our principled differences over this issue have created such tension and conflict in the weeks and months leading up to

today. As I look around the room, I see people who are allies in the struggle to care for those in need, veterans who fought to protect our rights to be here today and those of us who benefited from their sacrifice. We are not here to be adversaries. We are here to work with each one of you to create the kind of safety net that we all envision will protect and care for all people. We – each and every one of us - is here today because we believe in the power of democracy, the strength of leadership and the force we have together to change lives.

Alliance members have had several conversations with representatives of veteran's organizations since last April. I know I have learned quite a bit about the needs of veterans in King County, what services exist, and how they are funded. One statement from a veterans' group has really stuck with me: "*we never go alone and we never leave people behind.*"

As you weigh all the facts and opinions regarding the proposal before you, we ask you to also consider the division in our communities that this proposal has caused. We ask you to work with us, the hundreds of participants in the King County Alliance for Human Services *and* the veterans groups, to develop a comprehensive solution that will meet the short and long term health and human service needs of veterans, their families and the thousands of other children, families and seniors in need throughout King County.

Thank you.