



June 19, 2015

The Honorable Larry Phillips
Chair, King County Council
King County Courthouse
516 Third Avenue, Rm 1200
Seattle, WA 98104

RE: Proposed Best Start for Kids Levy

Dear Councilmember Phillips:

On behalf of the City of Kirkland, I am writing to ask the King County Council to include dedicated housing money for children and families in the Executive's proposed \$392.3 million property tax measure called Best Start for Kids if the Council decides to place the measure on the ballot for November 3, 2015.

Housing for families and children is a front-line investment in prevention and early intervention. Having safe and secure housing is one of the best ways for kids to have a best start. Kirkland is suggesting that King County dedicate one penny of the proposed fourteen cent levy (or add an additional penny) to provide housing for youth and families consistent with the purpose of the levy. Housing would be one of the most tangible investments in the levy and will help generate support to pass the measure.

When King County briefed the City of Kirkland, we were told that each penny would generate approximately \$4 million dollars per year, and that the levy would increase by 3 percent per year. Kirkland is therefore asking that \$4 million (plus escalation) per year over the six year period, or a total of approximately \$26 million be dedicated to building housing for youth and families consistent with the purposes of the levy. This critical investment is less than 7% of the total levy, or about as much as the Executive has proposed to spend on evaluation, data collection and service improvement.

Kirkland recommends that this \$26 million should be dispersed through King County's normal housing funding process, with the caveat that this money must be dedicated to children and family affordable housing projects consistent with the mission of the Best Starts for Kids levy.

Draft Amendment Language

There are many ways that the levy ordinance could be amended to accomplish this goal. Kirkland is proposing a straightforward dedication of the money off the top, which allows the rest of the ordinance to be unchanged. However, Kirkland would support any language that achieves the same goal.

Kirkland's draft amendment language is included in BOLD CAPITAL below to the current language as a starting point for the discussion.

SECTION 5. Eligible expenditures.

- A. Of the levy proceeds, **TWENTY SIX MILLION SHALL BE USED TO FUND AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES**, sixteen million dollars shall be used to fund and administer a youth and family homeless prevention initiative and three million dollars shall be used to fund research to improve outcomes for children and youth in King County.

As you can see, Kirkland is proposing that this dedicated penny be in addition to the \$16 million proposed for the youth and family homeless prevention initiative. The Executive's representatives explained to Kirkland that the prevention initiative is primarily about vouchers and services that *prevent* homelessness, and Kirkland enthusiastically supports this initiative. But the prevention initiative does not build permanent, secure housing for youth and families. Both housing and prevention investments are sorely needed and the two investments will work well together.

The City of Kirkland is committed to working with the region to increase opportunities for kids. We believe that a dedicated investment in providing affordable housing for families and children is one key strategy that will help provide children and youth in King County an opportunity to achieve their full potential.

Sincerely,

KIRKLAND CITY COUNCIL

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amy Walen". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

By Amy Walen, Mayor
City of Kirkland

cc: King County Councilmembers
King County Executive
Kirkland City Councilmembers