



King County

Dow Constantine

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October 15, 2020

The Honorable Claudia Balducci
Chair, King County Council
Room 1200
C O U R T H O U S E

Dear Councilmember Balducci:

This letter transmits the Best Starts for Kids Assessment Report, as required by Motion 15651, and a proposed motion that would, if enacted, accept the report.

This report analyzes the impact that the Best Starts for Kids initiative has had for children, youth, families, and communities since voters approved it in November 2015. The report provides data and analyses that will help inform the King County Council's 2021 deliberations on potential renewal Best Starts. Through partnerships with 383 community-based organizations, Best Starts helped launch over 570 new programs for children, families, and communities, all of which are community led. Across its investment areas and programs, Best Starts provides direct services to more than 425,000 of King County's children, youth, and parents/caregivers.

As called for by the motion, the report analyzes the implementation of Best Starts to date, considering factors such as geography, program implementation, investments, and equity and social justice, among others. This analysis includes a review of how Best Starts developed from community input and continues to rely on community perspective. In addition, it describes Best Starts' social and political context, including the dual pandemics of systemic racism and COVID-19, homelessness, and the institutional cultures of the many systems with which Best Starts interacts.

Since the levy passed in 2015, Best Starts has centered the values of equity and racial justice in its work, transforming county practices and service delivery in the process. Enacting this commitment has in turn resulted in sustained support for community-based organizations that reflect the people they serve and better outcomes for children, young adults, and their families. Best Starts is also deepening its collaborations with other county levies and initiatives in order to support and improve the lives of all county residents.

More work remains to achieve the Best Starts vision. This is especially clear as COVID-19 threatens to widen the racial, geographic, and income inequities in King County. To continue advancing equity and well-being for King County's babies, children, youth, and families, this report makes five key policy recommendations related to a potential renewed, increased, or expanded Best Starts levy:

- Recommendation 1: Keep Leading on Equity: Center the voices of Black/African American, Indigenous, and people of color (BIPOC) in investment and program decisions in order to reflect community knowledge and to deepen programming in Best Starts areas most impacted by systemic and racial oppression.
- Recommendation 2: Maintain Long-term Goals and Strategies while Refining Programs and Measures: Sustain the current levy's emphasis on upstream transformation by maintaining goals, allocations, and strategies as outlined in the *Best Starts for Kids Implementation Plan*, approved in Ordinance 18373, while refining performance measures, community involvement, and programming within each strategy.
- Recommendation 3: Strengthen the Care for our Children and Youth: Increase investment in child care and youth strategies to support educational advancement and economic prosperity in the region.
- Recommendation 4: Build Stronger Systems: Strengthen coordination across programs, initiatives, levies, and funded partners to increase efficiency and to benefit all families and children across the region, particularly those most in need.
- Recommendation 5: Expand the Role of Youth: Modify the Children and Youth Advisory Board structure to promote more youth participation.

As discussed in the assessment report, Best Starts for Kids furthers King County Strategic Plan objective of babies being born healthy, children establish a strong foundation for life, and young people grow into healthy adults. Reflective of the County's Equity and Social Justice Strategic Plan and the Youth Action Plan, Best Starts for Kids maximizes the assets and knowledge of our richly diverse County and its many cultures and communities.

This report required approximately 2,000 staff hours to produce, costing approximately \$106,292.

Thank you for your consideration of this report, and for your strong support for children, youth and families across King County.

The Honorable Claudia Balducci

October 15, 2020

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If your staff have any questions, please contact Leo Flor, Director, Department of Community and Human Services, at 206-477-4384.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dow Constantine". The signature is written in a cursive style with a horizontal line at the end.

Dow Constantine

King County Executive

Enclosures

cc: King County Councilmembers

ATTN: Carolyn Busch, Chief of Staff

Melani Pedroza, Clerk of the Council

Shannon Braddock, Deputy Chief of Staff, Office of the Executive

Karan Gill, Director, Council Relations, Office of the Executive

Leo Flor, Director, Department of Community and Human Services

Patty Hayes, Director, Public Health – Seattle & King County