



## Legislation Text

---

**File #:** 2014-0383, **Version:** 1

---

A MOTION requesting that the executive utilize an existing task force convened to develop sustainable solutions to the psychiatric boarding crisis, to review and recommend short- and long-term sustainable solutions for prevention, early intervention and least-restrictive alternatives for individuals in mental health and substance abuse crisis.

WHEREAS, the personal and public tolls related to individuals experiencing mental health and substance abuse crises are growing each year, and

WHEREAS, the boarding of psychiatric patients in hospital emergency rooms and acute care centers because space is not available at certified psychiatric treatment facilities is a major problem in King County, with over sixty-four percent of involuntarily detained individuals held on single bed certifications in 2012, and

WHEREAS, Washington state has broadened the criteria for involuntary commitment of people with mental illness, while simultaneously closing hospital wards, cutting state funding for mental health treatment and failing to fund bed space for inpatient psychiatric treatment, and

WHEREAS, since 2007 the caseload for King County's involuntary treatment court has grown faster than any other category of superior court cases, increasing by fifty-four percent according to 2013 data, and

WHEREAS, Washington state ranks near the bottom of the country for psychiatric treatment beds per capita, ranking forty-seventh of all states, and

WHEREAS, on August 7, 2014, the Washington state Supreme Court ruled that hospital boarding of individuals in mental health crisis, absent medical need, is unlawful, and

WHEREAS, through policy, programs and services, including the programs and services funded in part

by the mental illness dependency sales tax, King County is taking action to increase mental health and substance abuse treatment capacity to prevent mental health and substance abuse crises from occurring and to provide treatment in the appropriate setting, and

WHEREAS, without a reduction of demand for, and adequate funding of, mental health and substance abuse crisis services, the mental health and substance abuse systems of King County and the Washington state face both human and fiscal crises, and

WHEREAS, the King County executive and the Governor of Washington state have jointly convened a task force to work with hospitals and mental health and substance abuse treatment providers and other community stakeholders to develop and bring to state lawmakers short- and long-term sustainable solutions to address psychiatric boarding;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT MOVED by the Council of King County:

A. The executive is requested to assist the task force to find short- and long-term sustainable solutions that: increase the use of least restrictive alternatives for individuals in crisis, thereby reducing the demand for involuntary treatment, including the demand for involuntary treatment court services; provide for successful reentry into the community for individuals who have received services from psychiatric hospitals, including mental health and substance abuse treatment; and focus especially on the continuum of prevention and intervention services.

B. The task force is requested to submit a final report to the executive and the council on June 30, 2016, detailing findings and recommendations on the following matters:

1. Identification of services, programs, and protocols necessary for King County to reduce of demand for involuntary treatment services, including involuntary treatment court services
2. Identification of the continuum of reentry services from psychiatric hospitals into the community, including mental health and substance abuse treatment services; and
3. Identification of prevention and intervention services and least restrictive alternatives for

individuals in crisis.

C. The task force is requested to provide progress reports to the executive and the council describing the progress and findings of the task force as it develops and reviews recommendations for the final report. The progress reports are due June 30, 2015, and January 30, 2016. The reports to the council must be filed in the form of a paper original and an electronic copy with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers.