



Legislation Text

File #: 2016-0267, **Version:** 2

Clerk 05/19/2016

A MOTION calling on the executive to support efforts to increase the safety of infants and prevent child abandonment in King County.

WHEREAS, Washington state's safe haven law, RCW 13.34.360, allows a parent within seventy-two hours of a child's birth to transfer his or her newborn to a qualified person at a hospital, fire station or federally designated rural health clinic and do so anonymously without fear of criminal prosecution for abandoning, or failing to support, the newborn, and

WHEREAS, the safe haven law has been in effect in Washington state since 2002, and

WHEREAS, Motion 14104 requested that the executive convene a safety of newborn children task force for King County by April 2014 to provide a report with recommendations to the King County council and executive, including recommendations on how King County can engage in an ongoing, regionally consistent public information campaign to educate service providers and the public about safe surrender of newborns, and

WHEREAS, both the task force's report and a minority report submitted by Safe Place for Newborns of Washington, recommended increasing public awareness, and

WHEREAS, the task force identified a range of locations where posting, distributing or otherwise disseminating materials or information that would educate would-be parents and the general public about the safe haven law might raise awareness of the law and lead to safeguarding newborns, and

WHEREAS, the locations recommended for consideration included locations where pregnant women or individuals of child-bearing age might be present, and

WHEREAS, the locations recommended for consideration included locations where providers serve

pregnant women or individuals of child-bearing age, and

WHEREAS, the methods and locations recommended for communicating information about the safe haven law were far-reaching and presumed a general public unfamiliarity with the provisions of the safe haven law, and

WHEREAS, unawareness of the options provided under the safe haven law could result in individuals making decisions in a moment of crisis that place newborns, who are exceptionally vulnerable within the first few hours of life, in perilous, life-endangering conditions, and

WHEREAS, it is clear that the need to educate the public, including parents and would-be parents, of the existence of the safe haven law and identify locations where infants may be safely surrendered, persists, and

WHEREAS, on the evening of March 25, 2016, a naked, bloody and crying newborn with its umbilical cord still attached was found in an Everett, Washington, trash compactor, and

WHEREAS, a fire station where newborns can be safely surrendered was less than one-half mile from where the baby was found;

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

A. The executive is requested, within existing county resources and through integration with existing programs and systems, to develop and implement a public information campaign to educate individuals of child-bearing age, service providers who may come in contact with individuals of child-bearing age, county employees and county partners about the provisions of the safe haven law, the places where a newborn may be safely surrendered by a parent within seventy-two hours of the child's birth, and a phone number that individuals may call to obtain information on where to safely surrender a newborn. For the purposes of this motion, gifts, bequests or donations, including in-kind donations, to support the public information campaign and best starts for kids levy funds appropriated after the approval by ordinance of the implementation plan described in Ordinance 18088 Section 8.B, are not "existing county resources."

B. The campaign should seek to:

1. Produce and disseminate simple educational materials for county

workers informing them about the safe haven law, with special attention to county workers who might come into contact with would-be parents including, but not limited to, employees in Public Health - Seattle & King County;

2. Provide education to county workers, with special attention to county

employees who might come into contact with would-be parents, on how to disseminate information about the safe haven law to clients or service recipients;

3. Disseminate information on the safe haven law at King County facilities and locations where would-be parents could receive or see it; and

4. Explore partnership opportunities with entities external to King County government for posting or otherwise disseminating information about the safe haven law in their facilities and locations and to their clients including, but not limited to, Harborview Medical Center, providers contracting with the department of community and human services and fire stations.

C. The executive is requested to choose the education materials that will be used as part of the public information campaign in collaboration with relevant partners and county departments as well as the organization Safe Place for Newborns of Washington and to select how materials and information will be disseminated.

D. The public information campaign's education materials on the safe haven law should include clearly displayed information about where and to whom parents can relinquish an infant under the law and contact information, such as the toll-free number 1-877-440-2229, where individuals can obtain specific guidance about safe locations for surrender.

E. The public information campaign's education materials on the safe haven law developed by the executive should be accessible in multiple languages based on input from Safe Place for Newborns of

Washington and other relevant county and external partners.

F. The executive is requested to transmit to the council by December 15, 2016, a report on the status of the implementation of the public information campaign, 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.

G. The report on the status of the implementation of the public information campaign should include:

1. The date on which the public information campaign was in place or is expected to be in place, if the campaign is not yet in place when the report is written;

2. A list of the King County departments and divisions that will receive education materials and training on the safe haven law and on how to inform, when appropriate, would-be parents with whom they come in contact about the law;

3. A list of King County locations that will display or otherwise disseminate education materials or information about the safe haven law;

4. A list of the King County partners that will display or otherwise disseminate education materials or information about the safe haven law and their locations throughout King County; and

5. Information on the plan for ensuring that the outreach campaign, both the production and dissemination of materials and the training of individuals to disseminate materials or information to would-be parents occurs on an ongoing basis.