Legislation Details (With Text)

File #:	21-04 **Version:** 2		
Type:	Resolution	**Status:**	Passed
File created:		**In control:**	Board of Health
On agenda:		**Final action:**	2/18/2021
Enactment date:		**Enactment #:**	21-04
Title:	A RESOLUTION urgently requesting the Washington state Legislature to hold a hearing on the management of COVID-19 prevention and outbreaks in Washington state Department of Corrections facilities and to initiate an independent investigation of allegations about mismanagement of COVID-19 precautions and the impacts on people currently incarcerated.		
Sponsors:			
Indexes:			
Code sections:			
Attachments:	1. Resolution 21-04 - DOCUSIGN, 2. BOH Staff Report DOC resolution_sp.doc, 3. 21-04_BOHRes_S1_DOC_COVID_jm_sp bar.docx, 4. 21-04_BOHRes_T1_DOC_COVID.docx		

Date	Ver.	Action By	Action	Result
2/18/2021	1	Board of Health	Passed as Amended	Pass

A RESOLUTION urgently requesting the Washington state Legislature to hold a hearing on the management of COVID-19 prevention and outbreaks in Washington state Department of Corrections facilities and to initiate an independent investigation of allegations about mismanagement of COVID-19 precautions and the impacts on people currently incarcerated.

WHEREAS, on June 18, 2020, the King County Board of Health adopted Resolution 20-08 declaring racism a public health crisis and committing to work to advance a public health approach in addressing institutional and systemic racism, and

WHEREAS, Resolution 20-08 expressed the Board of Health's commitment ongoing work around race and equity and being responsive to communities and residents impacted by racism, especially Black and Indigenous and People of Color, and

WHEREAS, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention provides guidance on management of coronavirus disease 2019 ("COVID-19") in correctional and detention centers including a recommendation to

implement a fourteen-day quarantine period, and

WHEREAS, Black, Indigenous and People of Color are incarcerated at higher rates than white communities in King County and across the nation, and

WHEREAS, Black, Indigenous and People of Color experience higher rates of COVID-19 infection than white communities, and

WHEREAS, as of February 17, 2021, throughout Washington state Department of Corrections ("WSDOC") facilities, there have been 6,117 confirmed COVID-19 cases, which is 39 percent of the average population of incarcerated people, and 14 COVID-19 deaths of incarcerated people, and

WHEREAS, in King County, WSDOC facilities with COVID-19 outbreaks included 36 cases at Bishop Lewis Work Release accounting for 73 percent of the residents, and 8 cases at Reynolds Work Release, and

WHEREAS, community advocates and families have actively organized to address the needs of incarcerated individuals in WSDOC facilities and concerns over mismanaged and delayed COVID-19 outbreak responses, including peaceful demonstrations, reaching out to WSDOC leadership as well as local and state elected officials and the King County Board of Health, and

WHEREAS, after hearing powerful public testimony during the January 18, 2021, King County Board of Health meeting, the Board is concerned about reports of multiple COVID-19 outbreaks in facilities operated by the WSDOC, and

WHEREAS, the Board submitted a letter to the WSDOC highlighting those concerns and urging the WSDOC to take immediate action to implement recommended public health practices to reduce the risk of infection and illness to all people in those facilities, and

WHEREAS, the Board is alarmed by the increased risk of exposure to COVID-19 to all King County residents due to those outbreaks at WSDOC facilities in our community and the WSDOC's mishandled responses to them;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Board of Health of King County:

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The King County Board of Health urgently requests the Washington state Legislature to hold a hearing on the WSDOC's management of COVID-19, including prevention and outbreaks within WSDOC facilities and including vaccination planning, prevention and response measures. The Board also recommends that the Washington state Legislature conduct an independent and thorough review of WSDOC's handling of Reynolds and Bishop Lewis COVID-19 outbreaks and ongoing mismanagement of COVID-19 and the impacts on people currently incarcerated.