



Legislation Text

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A MOTION establishing a firearm safety task force to develop strategies to reduce the impact of firearm injury and death in King County through the identification and implementation of intervention strategies based on proven public health methodologies; and requiring a report and implementation plan.

WHEREAS, in 2018, through July 16, 2018, there have been thirty-one-thousand five-hundred sixty-one incidents of gun violence nationally, including seven-thousand eight-hundred eighty-five firearms related deaths in the United States, which averages to about forty gun related deaths per day, and

WHEREAS, since January 2013, there have been twenty-five mass shootings that have occurred in Washington state, that have resulted in forty-seven persons being killed and seventy-one being wounded, and

WHEREAS, gun violence, and threats of gun violence, whether from intentional or accidental use, undermines the sense of security that all persons should have in their communities, and

WHEREAS, the most-recent available Washington state Department of Health data show that firearms are the third-leading cause of injury-related death in Washington state, killing approximately six-hundred twenty-five Washington residents each year between 2009 to 2013, and firearms were involved in one in six of all deaths among youth ages fifteen to twenty-four, and

WHEREAS, according to the Washington state Department of Health, in 2015 in King County there were five-hundred thirty-five suicide deaths and one-hundred sixty homicides caused by firearms, and one hundred forty-six residents died from a gun injury, and

WHEREAS, in King County, more people die from firearms than car crashes, making firearm injury one of the leading preventable causes of death, and

WHEREAS, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, in 2015 firearm fatalities cost almost two hundred million dollars in medical costs and lost productivity in King County, and

WHEREAS, according to various Public Health - Seattle & King County analysis on firearm violence in King County, gun violence has a disproportionate impact on communities of color and that children of color are victims of homicide by firearms at a higher rate than white children in King County, and

WHEREAS, a 2018 study that included a broad survey of Washington residents found that thirty-four percent of adults surveyed reported having a firearm in their households, of which, almost one-in-five reported that the firearms were not stored in a safe manner even when the respondents reported that they had children in the homes, suffered from depression and suicidal thoughts or engaged in the significant consumption of alcohol, and

WHEREAS, local governments in Washington state have taken steps that work to increase gun safety, including encouraging safe firearm storage through the LOK-IT-UP program and enforcement of Extreme Risk Protection Orders in King County, and

WHEREAS, while these programs provide positive steps for improving firearm safety and reducing firearm-related deaths, there is no coordinated countywide effort among law enforcement, public health, suicide prevention agencies, youth-serving agencies, community groups and other stakeholders for King County residents for reducing injury and death from intentional and unintentional shootings, and

WHEREAS, there have been successful approaches to reducing impact of injuries and deaths in the realms of tobacco use, unintentional poisoning and motor vehicle safety through comprehensive public health responses that included regulation, education and safety measures, and

WHEREAS, King County could potentially reduce firearm-related deaths and injuries through a comprehensive, coordinated, multidimensional public health strategy informed by other public health successes;

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

A. The executive shall convene a firearm safety task force to prepare a report that makes recommendations for the development of a comprehensive, coordinated public health strategy informed by other public health strategies that have succeeded in reducing deaths and injuries to determine if these types of strategies can reduce firearms-related deaths and injuries. The task force shall develop strategies for intervention programs based on the proven public health methodologies that have reduced tobacco use and deaths, motor vehicle-related injuries and death, death and injury from poisoning, heart disease deaths and any other successful effort, to reduce and limit the impact of firearm-related deaths and injuries in King County.

B. The task force shall include, but not be limited to, representatives from the following organizations and agencies:

1. The city of Seattle and King County board of health and department of public health;
2. The University of Washington, Harborview Medical Center and the University of Washington's School of Medicine, School of Health and School of Social Work;
3. First-responder agencies, such as fire and emergency medical services;
4. Local law enforcement agencies;
5. Youth-serving agencies;
6. Suicide prevention agencies;
7. The department of community and human services;
8. The prosecuting attorney's office;
9. The office of performance, strategy and budget; and
10. The Washington state Department of Health.

C. The report shall include, but not be limited to, the development of a listing and description of potential strategies and programs that would provide in the county:

1. Universal preventive interventions for entire populations without regard to individual risk factors and are intended to reach a very large audience, such as school-based programs facilitating healthy social

development and proven programs that reducing aggressive behavior among children and adolescents;

2. Selective preventive interventions for target subgroups of the general population that are determined to be at risk for firearm injury, such as, suicide prevention interventions for older males; and

3. Indicated preventive interventions for specific individuals showing signs of the risk of firearm violence, such as the development of conflict resolution interventions for young men who have been arrested for possession of a firearm.

D. The executive shall develop as part of its report, an implementation plan, based on the work of the task force, including a description of each identified intervention strategy, the agency that should have responsibility for implementation of the strategy, an estimated schedule for implementation and the executive's estimated resource requirements for implementing the identified intervention strategies.

E. By July 1, 2019, the executive shall file its report 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 and the lead staff of the health, housing and human services committee, or its successor.