

Legislation Text

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A RESOLUTION encouraging the Washington state Legislature to address climate change and its health impacts, with a focus on communities disproportionately impacted by health inequities.

WHEREAS, climate change is recognized as a serious health threat that is already affecting people and communities across King County and the state, and

WHEREAS, climate change threatens the quality of human health and life. Projected local impacts include more extreme heat days, more poor air quality days from larger and more frequent wildfires, and heavier and more frequent rain storms and flooding, with associated increases in respiratory, cardiovascular, heat-related and infectious diseases, mental health impacts and hospitalizations and deaths, and

WHEREAS, due to existing health inequities and individual susceptibilities, certain populations in our community are more susceptible to and harmed by the impacts of climate change, such as children, older adults, pregnant women, those with chronic health conditions, communities of color, low-income households and those experiencing homelessness, and

WHEREAS, the federal administration continues to roll back clean air and energy efficiency rules, weaken vehicle fuel efficiency standards, and scale back federal efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and support our communities' work to respond to local climate change impacts, making state and local climate action more important than ever, and

WHEREAS there will be more demand for county resources, as the need for mitigation, emergency services, health care and other services increase, and

WHEREAS in 2018, Public Health - Seattle & King County released the Blueprint for Addressing

Climate Change and Health, which outlines an approach to incorporating health and equity into climate change planning across King County and provides a framework for organizing across the Public Health agency and with partners, and

WHEREAS, on November 19, 2019, the King County Board of Health held a briefing on the health impacts of climate change, and

WHEREAS, King County is currently updating the Strategic Climate Action Plan with a focus on centering frontline communities most impacted by health inequities, and

WHEREAS, the King County Board of Health recognizes the progress made at the state level in the 2019 legislative session through Senate Bill 5116, which requires utilities supply 100-percent-carbon-free electricity supplies by 2045, and in House Bill 1112, which regulates and restricts most uses of hydrofluorocarbons by 2024, and

WHEREAS, the King County Board of Health is committed to addressing climate change as part of our role to address health inequities, and

WHEREAS, equity and social justice should be considered first and foremost for climate policy, planning and action;

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

The Board of Health requests the Washington state Legislature to work with urgency to address climate change and its health impacts, centering on communities disproportionately impacted by health inequities by taking immediate action to rapidly decrease greenhouse gas ("GHG") emissions throughout the state, and across all sectors, by passing legislation implementing the changes articulated by the King County-Cities Climate Collaboration ("K4C"), including, but not limited to, the following actions:

A. Support policies that establish and use “cost of carbon” methods for analysis and decision- making;

B. Strengthen state climate change targets to align with the state Department of Ecology's 2016 recommendations which are complementary to K4C and the Growth Management Planning Council adopted

targets;

C. Institute a carbon-pricing mechanism, reinvesting the majority of revenues in projects and services that reduce GHG emissions such as transit service, energy efficiency and renewable energy projects, forest protection and restoration and others. Also, prioritize investments that benefit communities most impacted by climate change and ensure a just transition for workers in fossil fuel industries;

D. Support additional policies and actions at the state level to rapidly decrease GHG emissions, create the infrastructure for an economy based on renewable energy and fund efforts to mitigate and adapt to the worst effects of climate change; and

E. Acknowledge the importance of local authority in addressing equity and social justice, and provide funding and/or other resources for local municipalities to address their specific climate concern and policies.