

Legislation Text

File #: 2022-0253, **Version:** 1

Clerk 06/23/2022

A MOTION requesting that the King County executive create a workgroup to prepare and transmit a report to the King County council that includes recommendations regarding issues and responsive strategies related to human trafficking in King County and commercial outlets that may facilitate such practices, including an assessment of pertinent King County code provisions.

WHEREAS, King County has historically regarded the practice of human trafficking within the county as a challenge to the safety and wellbeing of vulnerable populations and to public order, and

WHEREAS, King County has promulgated code provisions intended to regulate commercial outlets that may lend themselves to such practices, including K.C.C. chapter 6.40, which establishes requirements and processes related to the operation and management of massage businesses and public bathhouses, and

WHEREAS, K.C.C. chapter 6.40 includes license application processes, including a provision for background checks, standards for denial of license, license fees, requirements for operation, safety and sanitation requirements, requirements for inspection by public health and fire control authorities, standards for suspension or revocation of license and penalties for violation, and

WHEREAS, the license for a massage business or public bathhouse may suspended or revoked for failure to comply with standards of conduct, including convictions by facility owners or managers for theft, controlled substances, prostitution, consumer fraud, obscenity or sexual offenses which have direct connection with the licensed business, and

WHEREAS, the October 2013 Report and Recommendations on Human Trafficking Response by the

King County sheriff's office noted that, as of the date of the report, data collected from online prostitution advertisement and other sources indicated that there were an estimated eighty-four massage businesses that were fronts for prostitution/human trafficking in King County, and

WHEREAS, the report indicated that, between January 2011 and the date of the report, the sheriff's office investigated twenty-two "massage" oriented businesses and that in the two-year period before the report, the sheriff's office wrote two hundred twenty-five total case reports for commercial vice including both escort services and massage parlor, and

WHEREAS, increasing attention to and concern about regional and national patterns of human trafficking has led to the establishment of a number of organizations and resources intended to assist in responding to this concern, including the Washington Anti-Trafficking Response Network, Seattle Against Slavery, API Chaya, the National Human Trafficking Resource Center Hotline and similar resources, and

WHEREAS, there appears to be increased recognition by many antitrafficking organizations of the life challenges that may make persons vulnerable to involvement with human trafficking, including youth homelessness, impoverishment, immigration status, forced isolation, drug involvement, victimization and similar circumstances, and

WHEREAS, aside from revisions for gender-neutrality and drafting style, the King County Code provisions addressing commercial outlets that might accommodate human trafficking such as massage parlors and public bath houses, K.C.C. chapter 6.40, have not been substantively updated and revised since its original 1987 adoption, and

WHEREAS, significant changes in King County's population size and demography, immigration flows, regional economic forces, global intercourse, social conditions, public attitudes and increased understanding of the context and nature of and drivers behind human trafficking, argue for a fresh evaluation of the extent to which key code provisions addressing this topic, including K.C.C. chapter 6.40, are effectively responding to regulatory and legal needs;

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

A. The King County executive is requested to create an intergovernmental work group on human trafficking in King County, with representation from the department of public safety, the department of local services, the prosecuting attorney's office, public health - Seattle & King County, cities of King County and nongovernmental organizations advocating for victims of human trafficking to undertake the following:

1. An evaluation of the nature, extent, and effects of, and appropriate societal and legislative response to, human trafficking in King County;
2. A review of existing codes that relate to human trafficking, including K.C.C. chapter 6.40, with an eye towards evaluating the extent to which they adequately address regulatory and legal, victim and youth protection and public order needs of King County, and make recommendations for revisions to and strengthening of code provisions; and
3. An evaluation of the system of regulation of businesses associated with the risks of human trafficking among cities within King County; and
4. A comprehensive review of businesses that might lend themselves to human trafficking, such as massage parlors and public bathhouses, in unincorporated King County to assess permitting status, and whether permits are appropriately applied.

B. The work group should prepare and transmit a report and recommendations to the county council evaluating human trafficking in King County. The report and recommendations shall include, but not be limited to:

1. The nature and extent of, and factors leading to, human trafficking in King County including the unincorporated area and the cities of the county;
2. A comprehensive review of commercial outlets that might lend themselves to human trafficking including massage parlors and public bathhouses, including whether permitting and inspection practices are effective;

3. An assessment of the needs and concerns of victims of human trafficking;
 4. Review of the roles and responsibilities of the county and cities and recommendations to increase coordination of efforts;
 5. Consideration of the need for a more rigorous system of inspections and reporting of commercial outlets that may lend themselves to human trafficking including massage parlors and public bathhouses;
 6. Evaluation of pertinent ordinance language including K.C.C. chapter 6.40, for revision and update to reflect current needs, as well as development of model language for consideration by cities;
 7. Recommendations for strategies and approaches to most effectively address regional concerns regarding human trafficking, including a public awareness and outreach element; and
 8. Recommendations for coordination and consultation among agencies involved in implementation of strategies resulting from the report of the work group, with particular attention to coordination between the department of local services and public health - Seattle & King County in the development and implementation of an inspection program for commercial outlets that may lend themselves to human trafficking.
- C. The executive should electronically file the report and recommendations requested by this motion no later than ninety days after passage of this motion, with the clerk of the council, who shall retain the original and provide an electronic copy to all councilmembers, the council chief of staff, the chief policy officer and to the lead staff of the community, health and housing services committee, or its successor, together with a motion acknowledging receipt of the report and recommendations.