



# Memorandum

**TO:** Satpal Sidhu, County Executive  
**FROM:** Erika Lautenbach, Director  
**RE:** Bellingham School District – Mental and Behavioral Health Staffing Agreement  
**DATE:** AUGUST 31, 2023

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Attached is an interlocal agreement between Whatcom County and Bellingham School District for your review and signature.

▪ **Background and Purpose**

The local Behavioral Health sales tax supports a range of services throughout Whatcom County, including prevention activities. The sales tax reserves are expected to reach just over \$9M by the end of 2023, in part due to higher than expected overall sales tax revenues and in part because of COVID service restrictions and staffing shortages among behavioral health providers. In addition, funds were held in reserves for a to-be-determined capital project and for general operating reserves.

Data from surveys and other collection tools show that youth suffer from a variety of behavioral health concerns including depression, anxiety and substance use. Youth mental health is a priority from a public health perspective to avoid or mitigate continued suffering and poor health over the life course. The magnitude of challenges associated with youth mental health in Whatcom County is supported in recent years by data from the Healthy Youth Survey, Community Health Assessment, and COVID Health Impact Assessment.

In order to increase capacity to meet student needs with direct services and build a sustainable system of support for students, this agreement provides funding for mental and behavioral health personnel and professional development within the Bellingham School District for the 2023-2024, 2024-2025 and 2025-2026 school years.

▪ **Funding Amount and Source**

Funding for this agreement, in an amount not to exceed \$1,140,000, is provided by the Behavioral Health sales tax. These funds are included in the 2023 budget. Council authorization is required per RCW 39.34.030(2) for agreements between public agencies.

Please contact Perry Mowery, Response Systems Division Supervisor at 360-778-6059 ([PMowery@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:PMowery@co.whatcom.wa.us)) or Kathleen Roy, Financial & Administrative Manager at 360-778-6007 ([KRoy@co.whatcom.wa.us](mailto:KRoy@co.whatcom.wa.us)), if you have any questions.