

**CLERK OF THE COUNCIL**  
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**WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL**

Senator Lovelett  
Senator Shewmake  
Representative Lekanoff  
Representative Ramel  
Representative Rule  
Representative Timmons

March 3, 2026

Dear Sen. Lovelett, Sen. Shewmake, Rep. Lekanoff, Rep. Ramel, Rep. Rule, and Rep. Timmons:

Whatcom County Council writes to express our strong opposition to the Legislature's consideration of additional cuts to Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion/Let Everyone Advance with Dignity (LEAD) and the Recovery Navigator Program (RNP).

Our local LEAD services depend on braided funding, with RNP resources playing a vital role in our operations. This funding structure enables us to address community needs while fulfilling legislative requirements set by the Blake decision. LEAD and RNP funding are not supplementary; they are crucial for maintaining an effective diversion system that appropriately responds to low-level offenses caused by unmet behavioral health needs.

For the individuals served by LEAD and RNP, there is no "next option." When this support ends, they often end up in jail, emergency rooms, or on the streets. These are community members who have already slipped through the cracks—shaped not by poor choices but by untreated trauma, severe mental illness, and systems that were never built to support them. LEAD and RNP intervene at the critical moment when they are most at risk of crisis, reoffending, or vanishing completely. Cutting funding for these vital services doesn't save money; it simply shifts costs to already overwhelmed systems, leading to more visible disorder and worse outcomes for everyone involved.

When funding for LEAD and RNP services decreases, it's not just a line item that vanishes. For those supported, it's a relationship, a safety net, and a fragile sense of stability. For the community, it's an investment, and a reduction in these services leads to lower public safety and increased suffering among community members. Without LEAD and RNP, individuals don't improve or become self-sufficient; instead, they often relapse into crisis, restarting the cycle. Maintaining these vital services means prioritizing public safety over chaos and dignity over neglect.

Washington has been a leader in this work by investing in this model across the state. That leadership matters. Communities have built partnerships, infrastructure, and trust around this investment. To reduce funding again now would risk unraveling that progress at precisely the moment when communities need stability and confidence that the state will stand by the solutions it has put forward. Thank you for your time and consideration of this urgent request.

Sincerely,

Kaylee Galloway, Chair  
Whatcom County Council