

RESOLUTION NO. _____

**REQUESTING THAT THE GOVERNOR OF WASHINGTON DECLARE
A STATE OF EMERGENCY IN RESPONSE TO THE OPIOID AND FENTANYL CRISIS**

WHEREAS, according to [WhatcomOverdosePrevention.org](https://www.whatcomoverdoseprevention.org), overdose deaths in Whatcom County in 2023 (117) exceeded deaths in 2022 (91) and have markedly increased every year since 2018; and

WHEREAS, Washington State is facing the worst drug crisis in its history, and the resulting tragedies are decimating families and contributing to extraordinary levels of despair in our communities; and

WHEREAS, there exists a substantial likelihood of risk to persons and property unless further efforts are taken to reduce the threat from fentanyl; and

WHEREAS, the [U.S. Department of Drug Enforcement](https://www.dea.gov) (DEA) identifies fentanyl as a potent synthetic opioid drug approximately 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin; and

WHEREAS, seven out of ten DEA tested pills with fentanyl are potentially deadly making it likely that '[one pill can kill](#),' and this year the DEA has seized over 360 million deadly doses of fentanyl; and

WHEREAS, our community's approach to fentanyl use and fentanyl-related crimes must be different than our approach to other illegal drug use in our community; and

WHEREAS, the use of fentanyl continues spreading throughout our community, and new and immediate avenues to enhance capabilities, coordination, and collaboration across local, state, tribal, and federal agencies are needed to promote public health and safety; and

WHEREAS, in June 2023, healthcare workers, tribal leaders, educators, community members and law enforcement gathered for a 2-day workshop, All Hands Whatcom: Opioid Summit, as a call to listening, healing, and action for the Whatcom community in response to the devastating consequences of fentanyl, meth, and opioids; and

WHEREAS, in June 2023, a coalition of government agencies, community-based organizations, healthcare providers, and others from across Whatcom County formed a Multi-Agency Coordination (MAC) Group in response to the local opioid and overdose crisis; and

WHEREAS, according to the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), a [Multiagency coordination system](#) is used for extraordinarily large, complex incidents occurring in the city or county involving numerous agencies and/or jurisdictions; and

WHEREAS, the [mission of the MAC Group](#) is to coordinate the ongoing community-wide response efforts to the opioid crisis, identify and prioritize additional short-term objectives and

1 strategies to reduce drug-related deaths, and mitigate the impacts on property and public safety
2 in Whatcom County; and

3
4 **WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County MAC group aligns with the Washington State [Opioid](#)
5 [and Overdose Response \(SOOR\) plan](#), which includes five priority goals

- 6 1. Prevent opioid misuse,
- 7 2. Identify and treat substance use disorder,
- 8 3. Ensure and improve the health and wellness of individuals that use drugs,
- 9 4. Use data to detect opioid misuse/abuse, monitor illness, injury and death, and
10 evaluate interventions,
- 11 5. Support individuals in recovery; and

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13 **WHEREAS**, on September 22, 2023, the Lummi Indian Business Council approved
14 Resolution 2023-145, declaring a state of emergency in response to the fentanyl crisis; and

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16 **WHEREAS**, Resolution 2023-145 provides the Lummi Indian Business Council with new
17 and immediate avenues to enhance capabilities, coordination, and collaboration across tribal,
18 local, state, and federal agencies and bring together state agencies, local law enforcement, and
19 internal and external partners to pursue and achieve solutions that promote public health and
20 safety on the Lummi Reservation; and

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22 **WHEREAS**, on October 24, 2023, the Whatcom County Council approved [Resolution](#)
23 [2023-041](#) supporting the Lummi Indian Business Council's state of emergency declaration in
24 response to the fentanyl crisis; and

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26 **WHEREAS**, on December 12, 2023, Whatcom County Councilmembers Buchanan and
27 Elenbaas sent a letter requesting that President Biden declare a national emergency on the
28 opioid epidemic and open additional resources and authorities to address the crisis; and

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30 **WHEREAS**, the Whatcom County Council understands coordination between all agencies
31 in our county as well as state and federal supports is needed to fight the fentanyl crisis; and

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33 **WHEREAS**, declarations of emergency at the federal, state, and county levels can open
34 up additional resources, funding, and assistance to address the fentanyl emergency; and

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36 **WHEREAS**, on Thursday October 26, 2017, the U.S. President officially declared the
37 [opioid crisis](#) a "public health emergency," adding that the "epidemic is a public health
38 emergency;" and

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40 **WHEREAS**, on October 26, 2017, and after consultation with public health officials as
41 necessary, Eric D. Hargan, Acting Secretary of Health and Human Services, pursuant to the
42 authority under section 319 of the Public Health Service Act, determined that [a public health](#)
43 [emergency \(PHE\) exists nationwide](#); and

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45 **WHEREAS**, the governor of the state of Washington is authorized under RCW [43.06.010](#)
46 and RCW [43.06.220](#) to proclaim a State of Emergency after finding that a public disorder,
47 disaster, energy emergency, or riot exists within the state or any part thereof that affects life,
48 health, property, or the public peace; and

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50 **WHEREAS**, the governor after proclaiming a state of emergency may place restrictions
51 on certain public activities to preserve and maintain life, health, property or the public peace;
52 and

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54 **WHEREAS**, RCW [38.52.020](#) establishes emergency management by the state including
55 rendering mutual aid among the political subdivisions of the state and with other states to
56 cooperate with the federal government; and

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2 **WHEREAS**, just as the State of Washington took urgent and decisive action with the
3 threats posed by COVID-19, similar action is needed to address the opioid and fentanyl crisis in
4 our state; and
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6 **WHEREAS**, Whatcom County Council Resolution 2024-___ respectfully requests that the
7 President of the United States declare a national emergency to address the opioid and fentanyl
8 crisis.
9

10 **NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED** that the Whatcom County Council respectfully
11 requests that the Governor of the State of Washington declare a state emergency for the opioid
12 and fentanyl crisis, and open additional resources and authorities to address the crisis.
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15 **APPROVED** this ____ day of _____, 2024.
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19 ATTEST:

WHATCOM COUNTY COUNCIL
WHATCOM COUNTY, WASHINGTON

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23 _____
Dana Brown-Davis, Clerk of the Council

Barry Buchanan, Council Chair

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26 APPROVED AS TO FORM:

27
28 /s/ Royce Buckingham (ch)
29 Civil Deputy Prosecutor